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"QUENTIN!" SAID THE VOICE HE LOVED SO WELL, "I HAVE COME BACK HOME TO DIE!"

AN UNNATURAL FATHER.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

Her name was Kathleen Verity, but she was always called Mavourneen. She lived in a little village overlooking the Irish Sea and close to Carlingford Bay; and at seventeen was as fair and sweet a maiden as the heart could desire.

Perhaps the quiet life she led had imparted that pensive air to her lovely young face, that melancholy expression to the beautiful dark grey eyes that in moments of passion or pain grew well-nigh black under their heavy fringes.

A wild rose colour bloomed on her cheeks, and short, clustering curls surrounded her face and nestled on the nape of the snowy neck.

Isolated as her life was, she was yet not

destitute of lovers, chief of whom was Quentin Derrick, son of the priest's sister—a handsome Irish youth, for whom most of the girls went sighing.

But Mavourneen's thoughts did not dwell upon lovers, either possible or assured. As yet her heart was as a child's, and all its passion was spent upon the frail, sweet mother who lay dying day by day.

To her the sea was a friend—if a boisterous one—the birds her companions, and she spent whole hours on the little sandy beach drawing in life and strength with every breath; growing fairer and stronger year by year.

The simple folk round had always a hearty word for her, and seeing her lissome figure afar off would draw one another's attention to it with such words as,—

"Shure and it is Miss Mavourneen; it's herself that alone would go out so far wid the tide coming in," or "Tis Mistress Verity's colleen, may the good saints bless her!"

So she lived in an atmosphere of love, content

with her life, not looking into the future; and, when her mother suddenly grew worse, and the kindly doctor told the girl she had not long to stay, it came on her with a terrible shock.

Mrs. Verity had long ago "set her house in order," and but for Mavourneen would have been glad to go, for her lot had been a sad one.

So, one summer morning, having commended her child to the care of an old school friend, she lay back amongst her pillows and closing her eyes, passed away quietly, without a word or a sigh.

The funeral preparations were very simple, and all through the hours which elapsed between her death and burial, Mavourneen moved and spoke as one in a trance.

When it was all over the lawyer begged her attendance in the little drawing-room, where Father O'Donoghue and his nephew, with one or two other friends, were already gathered.

She sat down between uncle and nephew, totally unconscious of the passionate pity in the latter's eyes; and with hands loosely clasped, and

head bowed down, listened to the conditions of her mother's simple will.

At the expiration of three days she was to set out for England, and reaching Liverpool would be met by Mrs. Carr—her mother's friend—who would carry her off to her own home in Yorkshire. Here she was to remain until her majority, when she could, if she chose, return to her birthplace or sell it.

A hundred a-year was to be paid to Mrs. Carr for her maintenance; the remaining fifty of her small annuity was her own, to do as she pleased with.

During her enforced absence Rock House was to be let, and the proceeds of the rental were to go to increase the principal, carefully invested for her by the dead woman.

Mavourneen started a little when she learned her destination, and lifting wide, piteous eyes to Quentin, said,—

"Oh, if I could but have stayed here!" and was blind to the quick rapture in his face.

She could never quite tell how the next three days passed; but her last night at Rock House came all too soon. She went sadly down to the beach to take a last farewell of her favourite haunts, and presently she was joined by Quentin Derrick.

The youth was very pale and haggard, but she was too absorbed to notice either this or his agitation.

With bent head and aching heart she paced the little strip of sand with him, and listened dully to the swish of the waves as they crept nearer and nearer, thinking that she should come here no more for four long years.

Quentin was the first to speak. "To-morrow, Mavourneen, you will be far away, and it's ourselves will be sorrowing for you."

Like him she spoke with the faintest, prettiest accent possible.

"You will not forget me, Quentin! I could not bear to fall out of the hearts and thoughts of those I have known so long."

"How can we forget!" he broke out passionately. "We are not fickle people, aron;" and he tried to take her hand, but something in his manner and voice had startled her, and she drew back with a little deprecating gesture.

But Quentin was too agitated to keep silence, too determined to let her slip so easily.

"Mavourneen," he pleaded, "listen to me for a little while only. To-morrow you turn your back on us for four years, and if I let you go without a word, who knows if I'll ever see your dear face again! Ah! sweet, I love you, I love you. Oh, yes! for once you must hear me. I want you to give yourself to me, so that no man may rob me of my treasure. I want you to lay your dear hands in mine, and promise that, happen what may, you will come back to me, and make me happy."

The boy looked so handsome, so earnest, standing darkly defined against the ruddy evening sky; his eyes were so tender, so passionate, that little as Mavourneen knew of love, her heart was inexpressibly touched, and she thrilled under his gaze. But her answer was quiet and steady enough.

"Quentin, we are both so young, what can we know of love! And my dear mother always prayed I would not hurry to give away my heart. I could not disobey her so much as to promise you anything; and—ah, Quentin, I'm afraid we've been too much together always for me to love you. So do not let us speak of this again until I return. Then I will be twenty-one, and you two years older."

He interrupted her once more.

"Is it me that you would doubt, Mavourneen, or are you afraid of yourself!"

She shook her head.

"I think we are not wise enough to know our own hearts or wishes," she said, very gently. "And if, while I am away, you were to change, who could blame you!"

"I shall not change!" quietly, and his dark eyes flashed. "I am yours always."

Her sweet face grew pitiful, but she was not quite convinced of his enduring constancy, and so could afford to be hopeful.

"Oh! yes, Quentin, it is you who will love

some other, and be happy with her; and now, if you please, we will talk of other things. Come sit down beside me on this rock, and let us watch the tide coming in together. It will be many a day before I hear the sound of the waves again."

He obeyed her moodily, and sat regarding her with passionate, half-sulky eyes, as she lifted her gaze to where, like a white bird, the Rock House nestled amongst the cliffs; and when he saw how pale she had grown in the past few days, how weary was the droop of the beautiful mouth, like the generous youth he was he put his own trouble behind, and strove to comfort her.

"You will have so much to see away in England, and I will have my work (and I mean to get on), and we will so fill our days, that the four years will pass long before we are aware of it. I shall go to Dublin, and shall pass all my examinations well, and when I am a full-blown doctor, then, perhaps, Mavourneen, you will be proud to call me friend."

"And am I not now!" with gentle reproach. "It's yourself, Quentin, that is the brightest and bravest lad in the village."

He flushed under her praise like the veriest schoolgirl, and looked inclined to kiss her, but refrained, being doubtful as to the manner in which she would receive this attention. So for a long time they sat together in silence, whilst the waves crept nearer and nearer, glowing purple and gold under the evening sky. At last, with a sigh, Quentin rose.

"We must be going," he said, regretfully, "unless we wish to be caught by the tide. Give me your hand, Mavourneen, and let me help you up the rocks."

Soon they stood side-by-side on level land, and the girl looked sorrowfully round at the green and undulating meadows, the distant bays; then, with tears in her beautiful eyes, turned away, and without a word her companion went homewards with her.

The next morning all the little village of Arrahdown was astir with unwonted excitement; everybody had turned out to see the last of "Miss Mavourneen."

Some of the women were crying, others bewailing her loss in a boisterous manner, and all were unfeignedly sorry; and when she issued from Rock House, pale and wan, some of the bolder ones pressed forward to shake hands with her, and force small gifts upon her. She looked round for Quentin, but he was not visible until she came to the beach, and then her little body-guard fell back, and one or two whispered amongst themselves,—

"Shure 'twas a pity such a handsome lad should be so wretched; an' faith, 'tis Miss Mavourneen's goin' has made his cheek so pale."

A little way out at sea was the vessel waiting to carry her from all she loved; and here, still closer, tossed the boat which would convey her, Quentin, and his "Reverence the prate," to the vessel's side. Amidst hearty good-byes she stepped in and took her seat; and then a little sob rose to her lips, but she bravely kept it back.

"You will write me, Mavourneen," whispered Quentin, who looked scarcely less miserable than she.

"Oh, yes; and often, often. And be sure that you send me news of all I know and love! and as the seasons change you must tell me just how Arrahdown looks."

"But I shall not be here, but away in Dublin, Mavourneen; and maybe, I'll be the most lonely and miserable of the two."

It seemed to Quentin that the men took a vicious pleasure in shortening their journey as much as possible; for soon he had bidden Mavourneen good-bye, and the boat was turned landwards. Then he lifted his eyes, and saw the girl standing upon the deck pale as death, and tightly clasped hands. He waved his handkerchief, but she made no responsive gesture, only her eyes yearned on him and the lovely land she was leaving, through a mist of bitter tears.

When his foot touched the shore, and kindly voices made anxious inquiries as to how the "colleen" had been parting from dear "Ould Oireland," he turned away, and hurried

homewards, ashamed of his own emotion. As he entered the house he heard his uncle's house-keeper singing:—

"When by the fireside I watch the bright embers,
Then all my heart flies to England and thee;
Craving to know if my darlin' remembers,
Or if her thoughts may be crossin' to me."

He dashed upstairs to his room, and perhaps it was no shame to him that tears were on his cheeks. He looked towards the distant sea, where the white sails of the vessel that bore her away were still visible, and he stretched out his hands in fruitless longing and appeal.

"O' may the angels awakin' and sleepin'
Watch o'er my bird in the land far away,
And it's my prayers shall consign to their keepin'
Care o' my jewel by night and by day."

sang the woman below, and the youth covered his eyes a moment, sobbing "Aron, aron, will I ever see you again! Ah! sweetheart, will they change you, spoil you, so that you long for Arrahdown and all its pleasant ways no more!"

How fearfully long that day was! He was at a loss how to fill the weary hours; he turned disgustedly from the bays, because he and Mavourneen had so often drifted together upon them; the rocks and the meadows were loathsome, and he heartily wished himself at Dublin.

CHAPTER II.

On the day following Mrs. Verity's funeral, Mrs. Carr, of Hawthorn Lodge, Beachford, entered her well-appointed breakfast-room.

She was a handsome matron, whose charms, although somewhat full blown, were attractive to many men yet. Her bright, brown hair had no silver threads to mar its glossy beauty—her eyes, though shrewd, were kindly; and if, as her daughters told her, she was cultivating a double chin, that was surely her misfortune, and not her fault.

Two young ladies were lounging in easy chairs; one reading a novel, the other engaged in making hideous grimaces at the snarling little dog upon her sister's knee. Nor did she desert from this occupation when Mrs. Carr entered. But the elder and darker of the two turned her stately head.

"Good-morning, mamma!" she said dutifully; "we have breakfasted already. Shall I ring for fresh coffee!"

"No, Judith. I had my breakfast in bed. I wanted to think over poor Ellen Verity's letter. My dear, it is her wish that her child should come to us until she is of age; and I suppose I shall have to meet her at Liverpool!"

Carrie, the younger, lifted her handsome face to her sister's level.

"I hope she'll be a good sort, so that the home isn't spoiled. I've small patience with folks who die and leave their encumbrances to others;" but she laughed as she spoke.

"It is a great nuisance, of course," Judith added, coldly. "Has she no relatives? and has she any money?"

"Oh, yes, quite enough to keep her from want. Indeed, her allowance will be more than sufficient; and even were it otherwise I could not let Ellen's child lack anything." At which speech Judith looked coldly contemptuous.

"It is to be hoped," said Carrie, resuming her occupation of teasing the dog, "that she is not very pretty; if she is, well, good-bye to our chances of winning Outram Pembroke; and really, Judith, you are not so young as you were—twenty-four is getting dangerously near to thirty. Of course we could not both marry him, but I am quite willing to resign my share in this eligible young man for your sake. I can afford to wait a little longer, being two years your junior; and she laughed lightly at her sister's angry expression.

"Be quiet, Carrie, I want to talk to you both seriously. You know what I have told you about Mavourneen's pretence! Let me say, girls, I hope most sincerely neither by word nor look will you let her guess the truth!"

"Mamma!" cried Carrie, "I hope you don't



really believe we could be such sneaks. Why, anyone who would twist her with what is her misfortune ought to be pilloried."

"I do wish, my dear, you would try to be less emphatic. And do you think Mr. Pembroke will approve slang or anything bordering on flippancy?"

"I am sure he likes me!" the girl retorted, laughing; "even if it is in a patronizing sort of way. And as for his uncle—well, he says of me 'that little imp is worth forty Judiths'; and do you know, mamma, once or twice he has actually called me 'my dear.'"

"I wish," said Judith, "you would keep to the subject in hand. When is this walk to start for England?"

"On Friday, and this is Wednesday. Girls, you must be very kind to her! Poor little Mavourneen, she stands all alone in the world."

"Mavourneen! Is that her baptismal name? How very absurd!"

"Judith!" said Mrs. Carr, with a suspicion of anger; "you seem determined to regard the poor child with dislike. You even quibble at her name; but, understand, I expect you to treat her with all courtesy;" and, as her mother was mistress of the house, Judith held her peace.

She knew it was vain to rebel, for, kindly and generous as Mrs. Carr was, she exacted implicit obedience from all who came under her sway, and not even handsome, stately Judith dared openly defy her.

An uncomfortable silence fell upon them all, which Carrie broke by jumping up, and exclaiming she saw Outram Pembroke coming towards the house. A slight flush crimsoned her face, but she showed no other sign of emotion.

Judith rose, and smiled at her already sleek braids, and settled herself in a more graceful pose; but in Carrie's manner there was even a slight dash of defiance, and she ran her fingers through her short locks somewhat to their detriment.

It was not long before the young man was announced, and as soon as he had finished greeting his hostess and Judith, Carrie pounced upon him with—

"I've such news for you; sit down beside me, and listen with all your ears."

He took the chair she had wheeled up for him, laughing a little; then Judith's voice, suddenly grown sweet, said—

"Oh, Mr. Pembroke, you know how Carrie exaggerates little things! I am really afraid her news will have no interest for you!"

"I shall be better able to judge that when I have heard them," rather felly.

Carrie shot a triumphant glance at her sister, and then proceeded to tell of the advent of the stranger in their midst.

"Judith don't cotton to the idea, but I say the more the merrier."

"I am afraid," the elder sister said, sweetly, "that the peace or pleasure of our little circle will be wholly destroyed; and you know, Mr. Pembroke, I am nothing if not domestic," and she smiled on him. "Now this poor girl has never been out of Ireland, and I am almost sure will prove a firebrand in our midst. I quite expect she will be a little hoyden, and encourage Carrie to follow her in any mad freak."

"I don't need much encouragement," Carrie said, with a funny moue. "I'm always ripe for mischief, as I think you know, Mr. Pembroke, Judith is the good young woman who never kicked over the traces. Now, how shall we spend the morning—for of course you intend staying to lunch?"

"Thank you, I shall be pleased, but perhaps Mrs. Carr will object?"

"Oh, no, you are always heartily welcome, and Carrie leaves invites at her own sweet will."

The girl started up, and turning to her sister, said—

"Come into the garden, Ju; it will be heavenly under the limes this morning. Come, Mr. Pembroke."

He rose leisurely, but Judith retained her seat.

"I am not going," she said, coldly. "I have work to do," so the young couple passed out

together into the square patch of ground known as the garden.

It was not very large, but the lawn was well kept, the flower-beds bright with many blossoms, and the whole surrounded by a high brick wall, flanked inside with limes, so that the house was completely shut out from the curious gaze of passers-by.

Under one of the limes Carrie flung herself with a careless grace the young man could not fail to see. She was very handsome, he thought, and her figure was perfection.

Then, despite her somewhat fast ways and slangy speech, she was very popular, because of her generosity and freedom from envy and malice.

Could he do better than please his uncle, Sir Blount Pembroke, by marrying her? She was most emphatically not his ideal woman, but he might do worse than make her his wife.

If Carrie had only known it she would not have spoiled her chance of being Mrs. Pembroke; but that she did not do so is quite evident.

"Why don't you smoke?" she said, and drawing out a cigarette, lit it, and inserted it between her pretty lips.

Outram looked disgusted, and seeing this Carrie removed her "weed," as she called it, and indulged in a hearty laugh.

"Oh, how shocked you are! Did you never see a woman smoke before? And, pray, why shouldn't we? Do you think 'saucy for the gender' is not 'saucy for the goose'?"

"Is it a habit with you, Carrie?" (By the way, everybody called her Carrie.)

"Not exactly that; but when cousin Jim was here he taught me; it made me sick at first, but I rather like it now," and she laughed again, but there was a shade of bitterness in her laughter.

"And does Miss Carr emulate your example?"

"Oh, no; Judith is 'a perfect woman nobly planned.' 'Tis I who play the black sheep. But to please you I will throw this away," and she flung the cigarette far from her. "Now smooth the frowns out of your forehead, and look amiable. Do you know you haven't asked a single question about the orphan coming to us? Aren't you the least bit curious?"

"I must confess I am not; but as you seem to expect it I'll begin a regular catechism. Firstly, what is her name? Secondly, who gave her that name?"

"Don't be stupid! Her name is Mavourneen Verity, or rather Kathleen Verity; but she is called Mavourneen. She is seventeen, and mamma says that she should be beautiful, because Mrs. Verity was the loveliest woman she ever saw."

"And has she no relatives?"

"None, poor little beggar!—Isn't it rough on her! Well, she will be with us in three days now. I guess she will be here about seven in the evening, and as she will be tired and a little nervous perhaps you had best not come in until the following day. If, as Judith suggests, she is a little savage, we shall have to forbid you the house until she has got a thin veneer of civilization."

"That would be awfully cruel, Carrie, and not at all the sort of treatment I am likely to submit to. I spend some of my best hours here."

"Yes," she said, with sudden sharpness, "because I amuse you even while I disgust you; but, indeed, Mr. Pembroke, I cannot be otherwise. I suppose I was born vulgar," and she sighed a little, whilst her dark eyes grew soft, and her whole manner more womanly, so that the young man felt more drawn towards her than he had ever done before.

"You are quite clever enough, Carrie, and quite sufficiently determined to make yourself like other girls if you choose."

"Oh, don't lecture!" with another swift change of mood. "You are scarcely old enough to be my monitor; and don't you know that it is only my *ohé* that has won me an entrance to Pembroke Hall. That hoary old slanser, Sir Blount, would not so much as look at me if I were ugly or demure. Do you know I often

wonder what sort of a husband and father he would have made! It is hard to imagine him in either capacity."

"It is, indeed; and I fancy had he given us a Lady Pembroke she would have been a miserable woman indeed—he is such a terrible domestic autocrat. And although most folks think my position assured, I am very far from feeling it is; the least indiscretion or disobedience on my part would be fatal to me, and he would choose another heir. I am the sixth."

"And pray what should you do were he to disinherite you?"

"Emigrate. Muscular strength and determination are just the things most needed at the colonies, and I have both."

When Carrie repeated this conversation to Judith she shrugged her shapely shoulders, and thought—

"If this is how the case stands I must look elsewhere for a husband. The colonies would not suit me," and then she wondered a little at Carrie's abstraction.

She would have been considerably surprised could she have read the girl's mind, have seen the workings of her heart. Poor Carrie! she was dreaming of Outram, and her dreams ran thus:—

"If only he would offend his uncle! Then I could show him how true and fond a woman can be. I am just fitted for an emigrant's wife; there I should be in my element, here I am voted masculine and vulgar."

Nobody guessed that she had a secret care, a secret sorrow, she was always so gay, so debonair; but, none the less, Outram had all unwittingly won her love, and she knew to her cost that he did not approve her; that, cordially as he liked her, she was perhaps the last woman in the world he would seek for his wife.

"And if I do not marry him," she thought, "I shall never be a wife! Heigho! what an idiot I am to care for a man to whom I am less than nothing."

CHAPTER III.

MRS. CARR started forward to meet a pale, slim girl, who looked around with an air of utter bewilderment.

"My dear," she said, gently, "I think you are Mavourneen, your face is so like your mother's;" and as she felt the cordial clasp of warm, soft fingers, heard the tenderness of the low, refined voice, Mavourneen's eyes filled with sudden tears.

"Yes," she said, simply; "and you are Mrs. Carr! My mother said you would love me for her sake."

The faint, sweet accent, the low wooing tones were so like the dead woman's that Mrs. Carr stooped and kissed her, and then, as though a little ashamed of her emotion, turned to look after the luggage.

"How many boxes have you, Mavourneen?"

"Only two. My friends said you would get me everything necessary, and when I came away Father O'Donagel gave me a ten-pound note, though, indeed, it was ill he could spare it. You see, he has so many sick and poor who need his help."

The luggage was speedily secured, and soon the girl and her companion were well on their way to Beachford, and the latter was regarding Mavourneen with some anxiety. Presently she said,—

"My dear, I am afraid you are very delicate!"

"Oh, no; I am strong indeed. But it is almost never that I am rosy, and I look paler in black; but I am never ill."

"I am glad to hear you say so; and now, Mavourneen, let me tell you something about my two girls. Judith, the eldest, is twenty-four, tall, dark and handsome; she gives one an impression of coldness, but she is a good girl, and you must try to make allowance for her manner. Carrie is two years younger, not so handsome, but much more popular, and I fancy you will be good friends. Dear, for your mother's sake and your own, I will do my best to make you happy," and leaning forward she kissed the girl's soft cheek.

It was almost dusk when they reached Beach-

ford, the train being fully two hours late, owing to a block upon the line; but Mavourneen saw with satisfaction that the country round was wild and beautiful, and asked eagerly if they were near the sea.

"We are within an easy distance of it—perhaps twelve miles. See, the girls are at the gate waiting to give you your welcome," she added, as the pony trotted towards the Lodge. "The darkest is Judith."

The faint light of evening fell all around the stately beautiful figure, in its robes of some soft crimson material. The proud, dark face looked prouder and colder than usual, and the mouth was set in a straight, hard line.

Mavourneen's heart sank within her; but she was a little comforted when her eyes rested on Carrie, who, in consideration for the new-comer's recent loss, wore half-mourning.

She opened the gate as Dobbin came to a standstill, and with hands outstretched welcomed the beautiful orphan.

"We are glad to have you with us," she said, heartily; but not being what she called a "gushing sort," did not attempt to kiss her. "Come and be introduced to Judith."

She linked her hand in Mavourneen's arm, and drew her towards the stately, repellent figure.

"This is my sister, and as she is a young woman of some character you'll have to 'kowtow' to her—we all do."

The little timid hand fluttered into the outstretched palm, and the wistful, beautiful eyes looked into the dark ones above as though seeking some kindness there.

Then Mavourneen shrank back a little, knowing in her heart that Judith disliked her, and that they never could be friends. But she had not much time for thought; Carrie's voice rang out freshly and clearly.

"Mamma, you must be awfully tired! Run to your room, you old dear, and whilst you are dressing, Jane shall bring you up a cup of tea. I am going to take charge of Mavourneen. Will you come too, Judith?"

"No; I dare say Miss Verity will not care to hold an audience so soon," and she turned towards the house with Mrs. Carr.

"You must have been mad, mamma!" she said, in an angry whisper, "to bring that girl here. She is very beautiful, just with that sort of beauty which appeals most strongly to men like Outram Pembroke. But if I can help it she shall never be his wife or mistress of the Hall."

Mrs. Carr's handsome face darkened, and she drew coldly away from her daughter.

"You are talking foolishly, and in a very unwomanly fashion, Judith. If Mavourneen Verity should win the prize you covet, I for one should not be sorry. She would make Outram a happy man. You would not!"

With that little shot she went to see her own room, where the echoes of Carrie's light laughter and saucy words reached her.

"I wish Judith were more like her. With all her flippant ways Carrie is generous and honourable. Poor little Mavourneen, I am afraid her life here will not be too pleasant."

When she went down to the drawing room she found both daughters waiting for her. Carrie said,—

"Mamma, Mavourneen is quite wearied out, so I persuaded her to stay in her room; and, if you please, I will carry up her dinner."

"Which *role* does Miss Verity intend adopting; that of invalid or child?" asked Judith, with a sneer which disfigured her handsome face.

"Judith, Judith!" remonstrated Mrs. Carr, and proceeded to pile Mavourneen's plate with delicate morsels of chicken, whilst Carrie spread a white cloth over a small tray, and adorned it with two specimen vases of cloves and jessamine.

She went swiftly upstairs, and found the girl sitting before the open window, her chin resting in her hollowed palm.

"Come, no brooding. It is not allowed at Hawthorne Lodge; and see, I have brought you your dinner. But first drink this wine, and when I see a little colour in your pretty pale cheeks I'll run away. So—ah! that is better, young woman. If there is anything more you peed just ring, and I will look you up again before I go to bed."

Mavourneen rose swiftly, and crossing to Carrie stood on tiptoe, drew down the handsome head and kissed her cheek.

"I will never forget your goodness," she said, simply; "and I would thank you indeed if I but knew how."

And by that little action she made a life-long friend of Carrie.

The next morning, despite the fatigue of the previous day, she was downstairs long before any creature, save the housemaid, was stirring. She asked what time the family breakfasted and was told nine.

"So you see, miss," added the girl, looking with undisguised admiration into the lovely young face, "you have two whole hours before you."

"Then I think I will go for a walk if you will kindly tell me the way to the fields I can see from my window."

"I shall be glad, miss; but you must have a drink of milk, and a bite of something to eat before you go. If you will please sit down I'll bring them at once."

Mavourneen obeyed with a smile, and when she had broken her fast went through the garden with the friendly housemaid, and was soon hurrying towards the pleasant meadows beyond.

The air was fresh and balmy, the dewy grass and wild flowers scarcely sank beneath her light tread; and a sense of freedom thrilled through all her veins.

She wandered on, finding many-hued blossoms under the hedgerows, filling her hands with the mildly fragrant and fragile flowers; and, growing conscious at last of hunger and fatigue, turned her steps towards home.

But she had come by tortuous paths, and it was not long before she felt convinced she had lost herself. She leaned over a gate trying to discover her bearings, but failing signally, and a perplexed look settled on the lovely *signon* face.

It was with a sense of relief she heard steps coming towards her, but when she lifted her eyes and saw a man not only young, but handsome, she was afraid to address him. As he passed he gave one swift glance at the sweet, troubled face, and involuntary admiration leapt into his eyes. When he had gone a little way he turned to look at the slim, graceful figure in its sombre robes, and met the wistful gaze of Mavourneen's beautiful eyes.

Without a second thought he hurried towards her, and, lifting his hat, said gravely,—

"I beg your pardon, but can I do anything for you?"

"I have lost my way, I think," she said, simply. "I want to get back to Beachford."

A smile broke the line of the firm yet pleasant mouth.

"I know every man, woman, and child in the village, and as you are a total stranger to me, I fancy you must be Mrs. Carr's ward."

"Yes; I am Kathleen Verity, and you have heard of me?"

"Carrie told me of your coming, but she called you Mavourneen. Now, as I am quite a friend of the family, I shall take you home. I am Outram Pembroke."

The girl blushed slightly.

"I would be sorry to trouble you so far, and I will be able to find my way if only you will direct me."

But Outram was determined; he thought he had never met so lovely and demure a maiden, and was resolved to see more of her.

"If her mind is like her face, the man who wins her should be happy."

Then he walked on by her side, chatting of indifferent things, watching the play of her features, the changing light in her dark eyes.

"And do you think you shall like Beachford?"

"Ah, yes! but it is sorry I am to miss the sound of the waves. They crept up and up, all round about our house; and when the tempest came, they rose almost as high as the rocks. Sometimes the spray would dash upon our windows, and it would seem as if wind and waves must wash or blow our home away."

"And you were not afraid!"

"Surely not! Do you not see I lived always there, and the sea was a friend to me; in the summer I almost lived upon it, and Quentin would take me to the neighbouring bays."

"And is it impertinent to ask who is Quentin?"

"Oh, no!" with a bright, upward glance.

"He is as my own brother; we have grown up together, and always he was so good and kind to me, and being two years older than I am, and very strong, he made himself my protector."

"You were grieved to leave him behind!"

with an odd sense of jealousy.

"Yes; but it is not long he will stay at Arrah-down. He will soon be away at Dublin, where he will learn to be a great doctor."

"You have great faith in him!"

"Ah! why not! He is very clever, and Father O'Donoghue (his uncle) hopes he will make for himself a name to be honoured." Then, as she recognised some of the landmarks so familiar to him, she added, "and surely I will not trouble you to come further. I will be able to find the lodge quite easily."

"But, Miss Verity, have pity upon me; I am so terribly hungry that I am sure I should never reach the hall in my famished condition. I am going to invite myself to breakfast. Believe me, I am almost one of the Carr family."

"Does that mean you are engaged to Carrie?"

with a naive frankness that amused him.

"No, I am quite a free man," smiling; "but why did you select Carrie as my future wife?"

"Because I thought you would not care for Judith."

"She is very handsome!" with quiet amusement in eye and voice, "and her manners are correct. Now, confess you think Carrie a trifle too hoydenish and flippant."

The beautiful, dewy eyes met his unflinchingly.

"I think her very kind and generous; it is not she who would grudge me a share of her home."

He held open the lodge-gate for her to pass through, and Judith, watching from the window, frowned darkly, then said, with a short laugh,—

"She has begun her work already. I hope, mamma, you are satisfied."

But Mrs. Carr had risen with a smile to greet the young people.

"I have brought the lost sheep back, and will you please reward me with a breakfast! I am positively famished," and Outram slipped into a chair between Carrie and Mavourneen.

CHAPTER IV.

THE first of September, and such an intensely hot day that it seemed stolen from July! The sky was a soft, intense blue, the air was heavy with the scent of heliotrope and clematis, and all the beds in the Carrs' garden flamed with dahlias, asters, and love-lies-bleeding.

These flowers, which herald the coming of autumn, seemed strangely out of place on this truly summer-like day, in which there was not the slightest suspicion of dying glory.

Even the birds had forgotten to sing, and there was not a breath to stir the drooping leaves of the limes; the bees droned on, almost too lazy to gather the sweets so lavishly offered.

The butterflies flitted from flower to flower; and as Mavourneen took in every detail of the beautiful, homelike scene, she drew a deep breath of satisfaction.

She was sitting under the limes, a book upon her lap, but she was not reading; for just a few moments since Outram Pembroke had swung open the iron gate and joined her.

"And so you are alone?" he said, with a sigh of pure thankfulness. "What a lucky fellow I seem to be lately! I was quite afraid I should find Carrie and Miss Carr with you."

"They have gone to Cotthorpe, Mr. Pembroke; but I stayed at home because my head was aching badly. Is it not a divine day?"

"I didn't come to talk about the weather," coolly. "I keep my small gossip for others, Mavourneen," and he smiled a little as his un-

wanted familiarity brought the crimson flush to her face.

Her head was somewhat averted, and he noticed with the eye of an artist how perfect was the soft curve of cheek and chin, how beautiful the slender, white throat!

Of late this little Irish girl had grown very dear to him—so dear, indeed, that all his hopes were centred in her, all the love of his life given to her; and if she would only listen to his pleading he thought he would be quite willing to forego his inheritance, if need were, for her sweet sake.

The tall, heavy-headed dahlias screened them from the observation of any curious domestic, and from the road it was impossible to see them; and so, growing bolder, Outram possessed himself of the little slender hands, and looked into the lovely young eyes with a world of passion in his own.

"Mavourneen!" he said, in a voice made strange by deep passion; "Mavourneen! what will you say to me? Will you tell me to hope, sweetheart? I love you, and you only."

A shadow flickered over her face as she thought of poor Quentin, and seeing it Outram's heart well-nigh failed him; but "faint heart never won fair lady," and he would not let her go easily.

"My dear!" he said, with a simple, manly dignity. "My dear! tell me the truth now; and even if your answer is not what I dared to hope it might be, I shall not complain. We English are not given to whining; and if, sweetheart, I am to be made happy, you shall never regret your trust in me." He paused and waited for her to speak, which she did, after a scarcely perceptible silence.

"It is yourself that loves me, not knowing who or what I am. And oh! is it wise so to give me your heart without question or doubt? It is so little I can tell you of myself."

"But, Mavourneen, that is no answer," the young man urged. "I know you are as good as you are beautiful. Ah! sweet, may I not hope?"

With a sudden tender gesture she turned to him, her eyes bright with love, her sweet mouth trembling.

"Outram, you know I love you," and then was silent, her face hidden on his breast, her breath coming quick and hard.

He kissed the bowed head passionately, and then, lifting her face with gentle force, looked into it with all a lover's first rapture.

"Are you frightened, little one?" he whispered. "Why are you trembling so?"

"My joy chokes me, makes me feel afraid," she answered, with that shy candour which was one of her greatest charms; "and it is that I would be quiet awhile, that I may understand."

He drew her close again.

"You shall be quiet for hours if you will only stay so," he said, with a happy laugh.

Presently the girl asked,—

"It is what your uncle will say that troubles me, Outram. I fear he will not be pleased."

"I am my own master, sweetheart, and shall please myself. Should you be afraid, Mavourneen, to start housekeeping on three hundred a year, which is precisely what I have to call my own?"

"Why, we should be rich!" with a quick, upward glance, and sudden clinging to him; "but oh! how sore my heart would be if I knew I had robbed you of all you prized."

"I should be content so long as I had you," he answered, honestly enough. "You are dearer to me than ancient lands, my home or even my honour, little darling! And you shall not long be left in doubt as to our future. To-night I shall tell Sir Blount all. If he approves, well and good; if he disapproves, well and good still."

She regarded him with undisguised admiration, he was so brave, so handsome; and what wonder if for the time she forgot the poor Irish lad, who also was willing to give his life for her, if by so doing he could serve her.

"Let me tell you all that I know of myself," she said, after a long pause; "it is so little; but perhaps Mrs. Carr can tell you more. Ever

since I can remember I have lived at Rock House, and we had no friends, my mother and I, save Father O'Donoghue and Quentin. And always there was a shadow on my mother's face, and an ache in her heart, and I know, even when I was quite small, that my father had brought it there."

"She never spoke of him, and once, when I asked her was he dead, she pressed her hands together thus, and said, 'Dead to me, and dead to you,' and then sobbed so bitterly that it was never again I dared to speak of him."

"I think," dreamily, "that perhaps he ran away from her, and that he had wronged her cruelly. Some of the people at Arrahdown remembered him; but he went away when I was scarcely six months old, and they say he never came again. And mother—well, she pined and pined through long years, and at last the burden grew too hard to bear, and so she died."

The sweet voice faltered and broke, the tender face paled, and that little downward droop of the mouth was more than usually noticeable.

"And there is no one else in the world who has any claim to you!" the young man asked, when he had comforted her after the fashion of lovers.

"Oh, but, yes, there is. Can I forget Quentin and Father O'Donoghue?"

"I hope not, my dear girl; ingratitude is not a pretty quality; but I meant, really, have you no living relatives?"

"None in all the world."

"Then you will henceforth belong wholly to me," with a jubilant ring in his voice; "and you will find me a terrible despot; jealous, exacting—"

She interrupted him with a low laugh.

"I am not afraid; and indeed you must not think you monopolise all the spirit. I am not at all a meek young woman."

"You will be after a month of my tuition and surveillance."

Her quick ear caught the sound of wheels along the dusty road, and she started a little from her lover. "That is Dobbin, I would know his trot anywhere; and oh! I'm afraid Judith will be angry with us."

"But why? Are we answerable to her for our actions?" a trifle hotly.

"No, but she does not approve me, and she will think such great good luck is not for me."

The gate was swung open, and Carrie entered first, bearing several packages. She glanced curiously at the couple under the trees, and by some tuition knew they were confessed lovers. For a moment jealousy and love held her silent, drove the colour from her cheeks; but she was a brave girl as well as generous, and dropping her parcels, went forward with outstretched hand.

"When the cat's away, Mr. Pembroke, I need not finish the proverb," and if her laugh was less blithe than usual, no one noticed that. "Mavourneen, child, how lovely you are with that tinge of colour on your cheeks—is she not, Ja?"

Judith advanced. "She looks wonderfully well," coldly. "I thought your head ached too badly to allow you to venture out?"

"I have found a certain cure for that kind of ailment, Miss Carr," Outram said, with a malicious smile. "Are you anxious to obtain the recipe?"

"Thank you," still more icily; "I am not a victim to the malady," and she walked away, but not before she heard Outram beg for an immediate interview with her mother. Her heart was full of hate and rage, and she almost prayed some harm might befall the girl who had won the prize for which she had striven. She went slowly up to Carrie's room and, sitting down, waited for her sister to join her.

She came at last, and did not appear overjoyed to find Judith in her chamber. "What do you want?" she asked a trifle crossly, and sat down by the window. She looked pale and tired, and her lips were set in a hard line.

"Well," said Judith, watching her keenly; "you see all has happened as I foretold."

"I know you are always croaking; but what particular thing has occurred just now to verify your prophecies?"

"Are you blind?" questioned Judith, fiercely. "Don't you see that what I feared from the

first has happened; that Outram Pembroke has asked that nameless girl to be his wife, and she, of course, has jumped at the chance!"

"An either of us would," with a short mirthless laugh. "Well, Ja, all run for a prize, but only one can win, so with all my heart I wish Mavourneen joy."

She spoke the words bravely and truthfully, even though her own heart was bleeding and torn.

"You're a fool!" Judith said, beside herself with anger.

"Softly, softly, that is unparliamentary language," retorted Carrie, with a smile; "and quite at variance, my dear, with your usual refinement."

"She shall never marry him if I have power to prevent the match; and do you suppose Sir Blount will acknowledge a girl whose father is unknown, who, perhaps, has no real claim to the name she bears?"

"But how is he to know that?"

"I shall tell him, if no one else will."

"You would not be so mean," Carrie cried, with flashing eyes. "And you know very well mamma is as sure of Mrs. Verity's marriage as she is of her own. And even if Mavourneen is less fortunate than we in her birth, that is her misfortune, and no shame to her. Pooh! there is far too much value set upon birth."

Judith listened with curling lip, and when Carrie had talked herself breathless, said, with a shade of wonder in her cold tones,—

"Do you mean to say you are not disappointed at the choice Outram Pembroke has made?"

"Oh, I don't go so far," lightly; "but I never supposed he would throw the handkerchief to me, I am far too 'loud' and fast to please him. Now, Mavourneen will make a lovely little lady, and he will never have to feel ashamed of her."

Without further speech Judith walked from the room, leaving Carrie to her own bitter thoughts, and that night Mavourneen sat down to write the news to Quentin.

She had promised him when they parted that should she engage herself to any other she would at once acquaint him with the fact, and now, with a great sorrow for him in her heart, she fulfilled her word. Her pen travelled very slowly over the paper, and this is what she wrote:—

"MY POOR DEAR QUENTIN,—

"I wish you to know how grieved I am that I must hurt you. You cannot forget how afraid I was that I would never care for you as you wished, or how I refused to give myself to you! Dear, what I then feared has happened, and to-day I have promised to marry Mr. Pembroke. Indeed, it was with all my heart I tried not to love him, but I was too weak, and now it would be more cruel than death to lose him. You see, Quentin, I write you plainly that you may not buoy yourself up with false hopes, and if the pain is sharp, it will the sooner be over. And I ask you still to be my friend, and to use all your strength to conquer this love of yours, so that again we may be brother and sister."

"Always your loving

"MAVOURNEEN."

CHAPTER V.

SIR BLOUNT PEMBROKE sat in his easy chair, a scowl on his brow and an angry light in his dark eyes.

He was a middle-aged man, with aquiline features; of a somewhat Mephistophelian type, mentally vigorous, though his physical strength had long ago been impaired by his excesses.

"And so you want to be married!" he said, addressing Outram, "and the lady is not that fine girl of Mrs. Carr's? I suppose you know that, unless your choice pleases me I am quite capable of disinheriting you!"

"I am perfectly aware of that, sir," the young man answered, beginning to lose his temper, "and it would not surprise me greatly. It seems to me that as I am the party concerned, I should have perfect freedom of choice. At all events, no man shall choose my wife for me."

"Isn't it a little bit impolitic to lose your temper

at the outset! Who is the girl? I do you the justice to suppose she is a lady."

"She is Mrs. Carr's ward. I think that should be sufficient guarantee of her respectability. Of her beauty I need say nothing—you have seen her at church."

"You are like most young fools, fond of the angelic type of woman. Give me a girl with some spirit, like that young limb, Carrie. If you raged at her she would rage back, not turn to you with a watery smile, and words of feigned forgiveness."

"I fancy," Outram said, with a smile, "you can hardly be called a judge of the sex. Your being a bachelor rather prejudices the idea."

Sir Blount smiled in unison, but grimly; then said, "And pray what is your paragon's name?"

"Kathleen Verity; she comes from Arradown, and is an orphan."

He was not looking at his *vis à vis*, or he would have noticed a curious change in him. It was only momentary, however, and then Sir Blount said in his ordinary tone, "And pray what were her people?"

"Her mother was a lady, but whatever standing her father had, he was an unmitigated scoundrel, for he deserted his wife and child. It is only fair, sir, to tell you that some folks declare Mrs. Verity never was married, but her friend, Mrs. Carr, asserts that she was, although she would not name the church where the ceremony took place, or tell anything of her husband's means or habits."

"That looks uncommonly shady, and I don't expect you believe I would receive a nobody's child here as future mistress! No, my boy, Blount Pembroke is hardly in his dotage yet; but as I am rather tired of hunting about for new heirs, I will meet you thus far. To-morrow you shall bring the girl to me, and if she can give me a satisfactory account of herself—well and good."

"But you must understand, sir, she has never heard the slightest doubt cast upon her mother's name. You will be careful not to undecieve her as to her true position."

"I shall act as I please," grimly. "Now bring out the chow, and tell me the news of the day."

The next morning Outram led the trembling girl into his uncle's presence. They had never before exchanged greetings, in fact had only met at church, and Mavourneen regarded Sir Blount with awe, not unmingled with dislike and distrust.

When Outram had introduced her, the elder man motioned him to go out, and when he hesitated, said sharply,—

"Are you afraid I shall eat the girl? Leave her home. You can wait in the ante-room," and seeing there was no help for it Outram went away.

Then Sir Blount regarded Mavourneen so long and intently that she grew more nervous, and a red flush mantled her cheek and brow.

"Come here," he said at last, "and let me see what sort of girl has ensnared my heir."

His manner was even more unpleasant than his words, and stung the girl into courage.

"I am not so sure that he is your heir," she said, throwing back her pretty head, proudly. "The uncertainty of your temper is not unknown to me."

Sir Blount opened his eyes very widely, and grew more interested in her.

"So my precious nephew has been blackguarding me after the manner of those who wait for dead men's shoes?"

"Mr. Pembroke is a gentleman," she answered coldly, and the listener chuckled grimly.

"It strikes me he is vastly mistaken in supposing you to be a meek young woman; but I like a girl with some spirit, so let us talk matters over together. Now what account did this young spark give of his prospects when he proposed to you?"

"He told me he had three hundred a year of his own; that we must not rely upon you for assistance, and I was content—more than content—to accept him on those terms."

"Knowing that I wished him to marry Carrie Carr?"

"I did not know that, Sir Blount, and had I,

it is small difference your wish would have made. Every man and every woman should choose for him or herself."

"That is your idea. Outram tells me that your mother's was a love-match; pray was she happy in it?"

"You have no right to ask me such a question," Mavourneen answered, trembling again, and her eyes sought his wistfully, as if searching for pity and consideration.

"I have a right to know something of your family. Who and what was your father?"

"I have no family, and my father was a gentleman. It was Father O'Donoghue assured me of that. My mother is not long since dead."

"And you can tell me nothing more? Of course you see yourself how undesirable a wife you are for my nephew."

"If you sent for me to tell me that I had far better have stayed away, and, indeed, it is not either kind or manly to treat me thus," and she turned to go.

"Come back you little vixen; but first call in that ally boy."

She obeyed implicitly, and when Outram stood beside her, Sir Blount said,—

"I have nothing to urge against this young lady personally, but I shall countenance no engagement until the close of six months, during which time you (to Outram) will travel, and you (to Mavourneen) will visit me daily. But if you are loyal to each other for that period, I will again consider the matter, though it is by no means certain I shall give my consent to it."

"Then, sir," cried Outram, "you intend fooling us to the top of your bent."

"That is a somewhat rash conclusion; but say that eventually I refuse to sanction your marriage!"

"Well then, sir, we will do without your consent," his nephew rejoined, coolly. "And now, if you please, I will take Miss Verity home; this interview has not been too pleasant for her."

He drew the girl's hand within his arm, and led her away.

At the door she paused, and looked back at the hard old man, with a strange expression in her beautiful eyes.

"You don't like me, Miss Verity," he said, with a short, hard laugh. "You have either not learnt yet to mask your feelings, or you are too great a fool to be a hypocrite; but remember, I shall expect you daily."

Her eyes flashed.

"I shall not forget, Sir Blount, although it is not I who will afford you any pleasure; we dislike each other far too cordially!"

And with that she was gone, and Sir Blount sat smiling grimly to himself. Who would believe that she had so much spirit; by her expression she should be meek, and he did not dislike Mavourneen more for her flash of pride; neither did he esteem his nephew less that he dared rebel against his authority. Still he took a wicked pleasure in tormenting the lovers, and when Outram returned he sent for him at once.

"You have determined to agree to my terms?" he asked, grimly.

"I have. Mrs. Carr advises that I should do so, for Miss Verity's sake."

"And she is not disappointed in the least that you have not chosen one of her girls," sneeringly.

"Not in the least! I don't believe she ever angled for me."

Sir Blount looked incredulous, but made no further remark upon the subject.

"You will be ready to start to-night; so be quick with your packing, young man."

"To-night!" indignantly. "The notice is very short."

"I intended it to be; I am not going to countenance any philandering until the six months have expired. And pray, have you any idea where your *fiancé's* parents were married?"

"Mrs. Carr says somewhere on the Continent."

"Well, that is sufficiently vague! Now, I have a rider to add to my conditions, and it is this. I give to you the task of discovering

where this ceremony took place, and provided you can assure me that Kathleen Verity was born in wedlock, I will not only give my consent to your union, but allow my will to remain as it is."

"But, sir," with a perplexed look, "I haven't a clue, or a single piece of evidence to go upon."

"Exactly so. Well, then, you have the better chance of displaying your genius," with a sardonic smile. "Now, if you choose you can run down to the Lodge to prepare your Dalcinea for the parting; for the remainder of the day I shall require your presence here."

Considering himself dismissed Outram returned at once to the Lodge, and finding the Carrs in full family conclave, at once imparted his news. Mrs. Carr and Carrie loudly exclaimed against Sir Blount's harshness, and the folly of sending Outram on such a wild-goose chase; but Judith was silent, only in the depths of her cruel eyes there was an almost fiendish look of triumph.

Carrie slipped upstairs to Mavourneen.

"Come down at once, dear," she said. "Mr. Pembroke has returned, and has news for you. Don't be alarmed; he is merely to start on his travels sooner than he anticipated, but then they will be over the sooner."

Mavourneen rose at once; she looked pale and tired, as if the worry of the morning had tried her strength too greatly, but she was calm outwardly.

"You are too good to me," she said, in her sweet voice, which sounded fainter than Carrie had ever heard it. "You are to me a sister," and she lifted her face to be kissed.

"Come!" said the elder girl; "he is waiting, and his time here is very short;" and if a pang of jealousy or grief shot through her heart she gave no sign.

Over the parting of the lovers it is well to draw a veil. Perhaps it differed little from that of many others, save that Outram was so hopeless of any good resulting from his quest; and Mavourneen was fearful lest, after all, Sir Blount was but playing with them.

She had no idea that her lover had any purpose in view—rather she believed his travels to be utterly aimless, the outcome of a freak of his uncle's.

And when he had bidden her good-bye, and she had watched his tall, stalwart figure till she could see it no longer, because her eyes were blinded with bitter tears, she turned towards the house with a heavy, heavy heart. Judith met her in the hall.

"And so he has gone!" she asked, with a scornful smile; "and you are prepared to play the love-lorn damsel! Kathleen Verity, I do not think you will ever be Outram Pembroke's wife."

The girl shuddered as though with cold; then, lifting entreating eyes to the calm, cruel face, said,—

"Why is it, Judith, that you so hate me? Have I ever hurt you? It is not that you can be jealous of me, seeing you do not love Outram?"

"Jealous of you!" with a short, hard laugh. "I would rather change lots with my maid than with you!"

"And—oh! why am I so to be so pitted or abhorred? In what is it I am different to others?" Mavourneen questioned, quickly and pleadingly.

"Some day I will tell you. It would be a pity that you should remain in ignorance always;" and without further speech she went her way.

"I shall acquaint Sir Blount with the facts first," she mused; "and if they make no difference to his decision, then she shall hear the whole story. And I think I am not mistaken in believing she will go away of her own will; then the game will be in my hands. And that letter I found of young Derrick's will help me not a little."

There was no pity in her heart for the helpless, orphan girl, who even now was bewailing her lover's loss, lying prone upon her bed with hidden face.

CHAPTER VI.

MAVOURNEEN sat—a book on her lap—from which she had been reading to Sir Blount. It was that wonderful story, "Sam's Sweetheart," by Helen Mathers; and having now reached the conclusion she was brooding over the history of its lovely heroine, the sweet, natural Yutha. Sir Blount regarded her curiously a moment, then said,—

"And you believe that so many men would sacrifice all they prized, all old habits, old associations, for the sake of a slip of a girl?"

"They were not all her lovers," the girl answered, dreamily. "You should remember some of them served her, and gave up their lives for her, when she was a child too young to understand their devotion."

The ever-ready flash mounted to her brow, and her eyes grew soft and dewy.

"And pray what is your opinion of Yutha's father?" waiving her last remark.

"He was a villain; and yet, and yet he could not have been all bad. In the end you see he, too, died for her, and nothing in his life became him so well as his death."

"Now, Mavourneen, I suppose you have heard your father Mired of your mother, and deserted both her and you, as Yutha's father did! Have you no strictures to pass on his conduct?"

"He was my mother's husband, and she must have loved him, for it broke her heart when he went away. Sir Blount, I would prefer not to speak of him."

"But if he is not dead; if he should return to you, what would you do?"

"For my mother's sake I would go with him if so he desired. My duty he should have always, but my love never!"

"Because he wronged Mrs. Verity?"

"Yes; always because of that."

Sir Blount turned to another subject with characteristic quickness.

"Do you know, young woman, I did my best yesterday to defraud (as you would call it) Outram of his inheritance! Shall I tell you in what way?"

"If you choose; and it is nothing you can tell me of yourself that could surprise me."

Sir Blount laughed.

"You are very candid," he said, "and I believe will respect my confidence. But first let me ask—did Carrie tell you nothing?"

"No."

"Ah! there is a good deal of grit in that girl," with keen appreciation. "Well, as my nephew would not marry her, I proposed myself as her husband. 'Carrie,' I said, 'will you be Lady Blount—will you promise to become my wife?' 'No, I won't,' she answered, flatly, and added I ought to be ashamed of myself. Good gracious, girl! why are you laughing?"

"Pray forgive me!" between ripples of merriment, "I cannot help myself; and surely it was none but Carrie herself could have made her refusal so charmingly blunt."

"I believe you delight in my discomfort. Will it add to your mirth to know she did not hesitate to box my ears?"

It was the first time he had heard Mavourneen laugh, and perhaps, cold and essentially cruel as he was, he liked the sound of her laughter, and not only liked but joined in it; but when both were more composed he said,—

"Those laugh best who laugh last, and I am not too old to make a second venture, and I'll be sworn the handsome Judith would not reject me."

"But is not Judith your would marry?" with a flash of mischief in her lovely eyes. "It is she of whom you would be afraid."

"Thank you, my dear; you pay my courage an exceedingly high compliment. And pray, if I followed up my idea, what would you and Outram do?"

"We should marry, Sir Blount," coolly; "we have more than enough between us."

There was something akin to admiration in his look; but he merely said,—

"Was your mother a woman of spirit?"

"She was very quiet and gentle," softly; "she never resented any wrong done her."

"The more fool she. There, girl, don't look so indignant, but get your hat and wrap, and run away. It must be nearly two o'clock, and I hate my luncheon to be delayed."

So, glad to be released, Mavourneen wished him good-morning, and hurried off to the Lodge. As she slipped into her seat at table Mrs. Carr looked across at her.

"My dear, Judith says that, as your mourning will not allow you to share any of the fun going on round us, she will remain with you this evening. Of course I must go to chaperon Carrie, as there will be quite a large carpet dance."

"Oh, indeed! Indeed, Judith, you are too kind; but I would prefer you should go. There will be much enjoyment you would not care to miss."

"I trust I understand what is due to a guest," Judith answered, with less frigidity than usual; "and if you wish to write to Mr. Pembroke I will make myself conspicuous by my absence."

"But it will be such a sore disappointment to you," urged Mavourneen, who did not relish the idea of an evening spent with Miss Carr, "and I shall find ample amusement amongst my books and music."

"It is very rarely I perform a meritorious action," Judith said, with a strange smile. "At least let me have the opportunity of distinguishing myself to-night."

"Yes, yes, Mavourneen," broke in Mrs. Carr, "and neither Carrie nor myself would consent to leave you alone for so long a time."

The grateful grey eyes met hers a moment, and the girl said, softly,—

"It is too good you all are to me," and was angry with herself that she could not appreciate Judith's self-denial more highly.

At seven Carrie entered the dining room, and, throwing a large cloak over her finery, announced she was quite ready to start.

She and her mother were due at a certain Mrs. Goshawk's, where a "harvest home" was to be held, and Carrie declared her intention of running the whole way lest the damp air should take the crispness from her frills and furbelows.

"Rather trying for me," laughed Mrs. Carr, stooping to kiss Mavourneen. "Be good girls whilst we are away."

"Yes," broke in Carrie; "don't have a row royal in our absence. T-t-t, Jo. I'll convey your kindest regards to all the most eligible young men present."

And so she was gone, and when again she saw Mavourneen's sweet face it was changed almost beyond recognition.

For a long time Judith and Mavourneen exchanged no words. The former appeared engrossed with her book and the latter sat playing and singing old Irish ballads, and the tender melodies to which so many of Moore's words are set. But now she broke into a more stirring strain.

"Weep on, weep on, your hour is past.
Your dreams of pride are o'er;
The fatal chain is round you cast,
And you are men no more.
In vain the hero's heart hath bled;
The sage's tongue hath warned in vain,
O, Freedom! once thy flame hath fled
It never lights again!"

And as for a moment she paused Judith's voice, cold and clear, reached her.

"Come and sit close by me; I want to talk to you."

Mavourneen rose, a trifle reluctantly, and, closing the piano sat down opposite Judith with her hands loosely folded on her lap, her dewy eyes grown attentive.

"You asked me but yesterday to tell you in what you are different to other girls. Are you still curious? Shall I make all plain to you now?"

"I would be glad to hear what you have to say," Mavourneen answered, quietly; but a faint, vague dread stirred her heart, and her breath came quickly.

"First let me ask you if you love Outram Pembroke for what he is, not for what he will be?"

The look on the pure young face was an eloquent answer, and Judith went on,—

"Do you love him well enough to sacrifice yourself for his good, to give up all hope of ever being more to him than now—even to resign yourself to the fear of his forgetfulness of you?"

The sweet face was very pale now, and the dark eyes darker with unspoken fear.

"I cannot tell how far my courage might sustain me," in an unsteady voice; "but it would be my endeavour to place Outram first."

"That being the case, you will give him his freedom. If he marries you he would be cut by the whole county; and Sir Blount, knowing the facts of the case, would never consent to such an unequal union. I think it only right you should be acquainted with your own story, and much as it pains me to dwell on such a subject, I hope I shall not be tempted to forego my duty."

"What is it you mean? What is there in my story of which I am ignorant?"

Oh, the poor, pale child! Surely those anguished eyes, that piteous, entreating face, should have won some mercy from the foe.

"What do you first remember, Kathleen? What are your earliest impressions?"

"If I look back, I see myself a tiny child, always watched over and dearly loved by my mother; and she is always sad; so sad that she rarely smiles, and I never hear her laugh" (she was speaking in a dreamy way, as though she had really gone back to old scenes, old associations). "All the people pity her, and the women whisper she is dying of a broken heart. Sometimes she looks at me strangely, and clasping me in her arms, will cry out it were best if we two lay dead together."

She ceased suddenly and bowed her face on her arms. Judith watched her pitifully, contemptuously, then—"Don't you see to what her words and manner pointed?"

Mavourneen shook her head, but did not glance up. She sat waiting for the blow!

"Do you remember your father? Did Mrs. Verity never speak of him?"

"No; he broke her heart and wrecked her life. Is it you who will wonder his name never passed her lips?"

"Shall I tell you why?" leaning forward and laying one cold hand upon the girl.

"Your mother had never any right to the name of Verity—she was never married!"

Mavourneen started to her feet. "You lie!" she cried, and the colour rushed lustily into her sweet face; her eyes flashed with dangerous fire. "It is false! My mother was an angel."

"A fallen one," coldly. "Did you find any certificate of marriage amongst her papers after her death? Was there any creature who could tell you when and where she became a wife? Was she not friendless to the end of her days because of her sin? And then, when she lay dying did she not commend you to the care of her old school friend? Do you not think it strange she should not send you either to her own relatives or your father's? There must have been some at least on one side."

The flush had died from Mavourneen's face, the fire had faded from her eyes. Did not every word Judith uttered go to prove her story? And yet, and yet, could she connect sin or shame with the memory of that dear, dead mother? She leaned against the wall, her hands pressed hard upon her breast, her breath coming in gasps; then with an effort she said,—

"If, indeed, this tale is true, Outram is free. I am not fit mate for any man of honest birth; but I will not wrong my mother as you would have me do; if she was not legally Mrs. Verity, in Heaven's sight my heart tells me she was, and the villain I call my father entrapped her into a false marriage."

Judith laughed shortly.

"Such things do not happen in the nineteenth century. Your mother went to her shame with open eyes, and no man knowing that would care to link his life with yours because it is said, 'Like mother like daughter.'"

What low bitter cry was that which rent the air? What slim figure was it that rushed blindly upstairs only to sink prostrate behind the bed, and to wall in a dreadful undertone!

"Oh! my mother! oh, my mother! Come back to me, if but to say I am not the child of sin! Oh! my love, my love, what bitter fate draw us together."

A little later the door opened, and in the dim light a tall and stately figure was seen.

"What shall you do now, Kathleen Verity?" And without rising, the girl answered,—

"Until my mother's honour is cleared, Outram Pembroke may count himself as free. Go now, I never want to see your face again."

CHAPTER VII.

JUDITH had altered her original plans. She had once intended repeating the story of Mavourneen's birth to Sir Blount; but reflecting that he was an eccentric man, and would probably espouse the girl's cause from sheer perversity, she changed her tactics.

It was in a very self-satisfied mood that she went downstairs and remained there alone until her mother and Carrie returned.

"Where is Mavourneen?" they asked, in a breath, and Judith's face clouded at their affectionate solicitude, but she answered in a sufficiently equable voice,—

"She complained of being weary and went to bed after tea."

Carrie was disappointed; she liked nothing so well as a confidential chat with her mother's ward, and when she went upstairs stole into the girl's room in the hope of finding her awake. But, apparently, Mavourneen was sleeping quietly, and closing the door Carrie went away.

Early the next morning Mavourneen appeared in the breakfast-room. No one was down but the young housemaid, and she looked alarmed at the unwonted pallor of Mavourneen's cheeks, the unnatural brilliancy of her eyes.

"Surely, miss," she said, disapprovingly, "you don't think of going out such a rough morning, and looking so bad as you do?"

"A walk will be good for me, Annie, but I shall be glad if you will get me a cup of coffee; I am feeling very cold."

In a little while she had made her poor breakfast, and passing into the hall slipped a letter in the bag for Mrs. Carr; then she walked out with firm step into the driving rain and cruel wind.

She had but one desire—to get away from Beachford, to hide herself and her shame away from all; but it soothed her a little to think that Carrie and Mrs. Carr would miss her and grieve for her.

At last the family came down to breakfast, and Mrs. Carr said,—

"I will send some coffee up to Mavourneen; perhaps the poor child is not well—"

Here she was interrupted by the housemaid.

"If you please, ma'am, Miss Verity went out at seven o'clock, and she hasn't come back yet."

Mrs. Carr looked vexed.

"It was simply madness to venture out in such weather," and stretched out her hand to take the letters from Annie.

She read through some of them in a leisurely fashion, but suddenly she started and grew pale as she recognised Mavourneen's familiar writing upon one of the envelopes.

Dreading she knew not what, she tore it open, and with increasing agitation read,—

"DEAR MRS. CARR,—

"This morning I am leaving Beachford for ever, because I know something of my poor mother's story now. Last night it was that Judith told me I had no right to the name I bear, that I am the child of sin. But I pray you to remember in nothing do I blame my mother; I know she must have been the victim of some cruel trick. I would wish you not to acquaint Outram with my flight. You see we must be strangers now for all time, unless indeed I am so happy as to solve this mystery. I am going back to those who have always loved me, and it will be vain to beg of me to return. Amongst my own countryfolk I will perhaps find rest—but never happiness again! I leave my dear love to

you and Carrie, and I will never forget to pray for you, that your lives may be brighter than mine. Oh, my dear friend! my dear friend! there is none can tell you how much I suffer in thus going away from you. Forgive me and forget me! Do not follow me, for that would be only to aggravate my grief. When I have had time to think, time to learn calmness, I will write you again, until when—and always after—believe me your own loving

"MAVOURNEEN."

Mrs. Carr dismissed the maid and then laid the open letter between her daughters.

"Read that," she said, in a hard voice, "and when you have finished, Judith, I shall have something to say to you."

Carrie was loud in her exclamations of anger and grief, but Judith rose, quiet and composed.

"I shall be happy to listen to anything you have to say, mamma. Carrie, you need not go. I am able to endure scorn and anger alike, because I am upheld by the sense of having done my duty."

"Your duty!" almost screamed Carrie. "Was it your duty to drive a poor helpless child from her only home; to tell her foul tales of her dead mother?"

"Carrie, I think you had best leave us," interrupted Mrs. Carr; "this matter rests between Judith and me." And when the girl had obeyed there followed such a stormy scene that the mother was left weeping hysterically, and the daughter went upstairs with a look of cruel resolve upon her handsome face.

She dressed quickly but tastefully, because she wished to produce a favourable impression; then, regardless as Mavourneen had been of wind and rain, went out in the direction of Pembroke Hall. The footman looked aghast when he opened the door to her, and said—

"Indeed, miss, I dare not announce you; Sir Blount objects to visitors so early in the day."

"Then I must announce myself," she answered, calmly; "my business with Sir Blount allows no delay. Will you take my card and message to him or no?"

She looked so formidable in her haughty beauty that the man decided it would be best to obey her, especially as she slipped a half-sovereign into his hand.

In a short time he returned.

"My master will see you, Miss Carr; please follow me," and he ushered her into a large, handsome room, where Sir Blount was sitting slipping cocoas.

"Excuse me rising," he said, courteously, and not allowing his surprise at her appearance to manifest itself either in look or tone. "I've a touch of my old enemy, the gout. Pray sit down, and allow me to assure you I never was more flattered than by this unexpected and welcome visit."

Her lips curled a trifle scornfully, and she had a faint suspicion that the Baronet was mocking her; but she had her temper well under control.

"I wished to see you about Miss Verity," she said, coming at once to her subject. "I think it but fair to you and Mr. Pembroke to acquaint you with her story. It is a delicate and painful duty, but none the less must I perform it. Sir Blount, this projected marriage can never take place. Kathleen Verity is the child of shame."

His keen, dark eyes rested in cynical scrutiny on her handsome, impassive face; a cold smile relaxed the line of his lips.

"My dear young lady, your news astonishes me, as much as your also sense of honour delights me. May I beg you to give me full particulars of this disgraceful story? It is a delicate task, as you justly observe, but now you have commenced you must go through with it; and I shall have a word to say to Mrs. Carr on her imprudence in receiving Miss Verity into her home, and solating her upon respectable society."

Judith began to congratulate herself upon the manner in which Sir Blount had heard her statement, and did not fail to expatiate on Mrs. Verity's misdemeanours.

"Her name was Edith Orand, and she was at

school with my mother; but she ran away with a man whom nobody knew, and was not heard of for some years. Then she reappeared, and was utterly repudiated by her parents and relatives, because she would not, or could not, give any particulars concerning her marriage or her husband's position. She then returned to Arradown, where she remained until her death. I will do the girl the justice to say she was entirely ignorant of these things [until last night]."

"When your duty compelled you to make them known to her?"

There was something so cynical in his tone that Judith flushed, but otherwise maintained her composure, and continued her story.

"Had I foreseen the result of my disclosure I should hardly have made it. This morning Kathleen Verity stole out of the house, and by this time is well on her way to Ireland."

"What!" cried the Baronet, starting up and wholly forgetting his gout. "Do you mean she has gone off for good?"

"Here is her letter. I contrived to secure that, but I would not have you deceived by it. It is my opinion she had long resolved to go. She had an Irish lover, and probably it was only Mr. Pembroke's expectations which prevailed upon her to accept him. When she found how matters really stood she turned to her former lover. Please oblige me by looking at this," and she placed poor Quentin's letter before him.

Sir Blount had recoiled himself, and was regarding Judith with admiration—whether real or feigned was best known to himself.

"My nephew and I owe you a heavy debt for your disinterested conduct," and with those words he took the note—for it was little more—and read it carefully aloud.

"MAVOURNEEN,—

"You have already forgotten me and that night on the sands when I prayed you to give me your promise. Ardon, what shall I say to you? Can I ask you to be false to this man who has stepped into the place I so coveted, who fills your life, and calls your love his own? Ah, sweetheart! there will be none to care for you as I do, and not all the glare and glitter of a new life will atone to you for loss of your old friends, your old lands. Am I selfish? Well, then it is grief that makes me so, for have I not always your welfare at heart? But one thing less me urge upon you, Mavourneen; let there be no secrecy about your marriage, for it was silence and concealment killed my mother."

"When I am better able to write calmly I will send you a line.—Always yours,

"QUENTIN."

Sir Blount looked up.

"My dear Miss Carr, I really cannot see this proves the girl false. It is not improbable this fellow here presumed upon her loneliness and inexperience. She seemed to me a very innocent child."

"I thought her so once; but recently my eyes have been opened to her shortcomings. She kept up an almost daily correspondence with this Quentin Derrick, and I am sure, had he possessed Mr. Pembroke's advantages, would never have broken her word to him. She is as false as Grenda, and in her case the proverb 'Like mother, like daughter,' has been verified."

She paused, for Sir Blount seemed not to be listening. His eyes were turned upon the fire, and his face was not good to see; but when he confronted her he wore his usual half-cynical expression.

"I will at once acquaint my nephew with your statement, and as he is not a man to forgive wanton deception, this ill-starred engagement will soon be ended. I trust, too, in his next choice he will be governed by me, and I should wish it to fall upon one of Mrs. Carr's lovely daughters."

Despite her self-assurance Judith blushed, remembering what hope she nursed in her cold heart.

"I am sure," she said softly, "we regard Mr.

Pembroke in the light of a brother, and any misfortune which touches him touches us also. You will assure him that he has our deepest sympathy."

"Oh, that goes without saying. Yes, I will tell him when I write. And now, Miss Carr," as Judith rose, "you will allow me to order out the carriage; it is unfit for you to walk back, and you must have a glass of wine before you go."

She accepted the wine with a smile, but refused the carriage obstinately, and as Sir Blount watched her going down the drive, he laughed, sardonically.

"So you came here without your mother's knowledge, my black-browed beauty, and you think if not the nephew, the uncle! Thanks, no, my stately Jaël!" and he indulged in immoderate mirth. "I'll try what stuff those young fools are made of," he thought next, "and most decidedly I shall not write to Outram—let him rush his wild goose chase."

The following day, as Quentin Derrick stood watching the tossing, tumbling waves which seemed ready to engulf the little boat struggling from the steamer to the shore, he thought he saw a handkerchief waved to him and scrambled down to the beach just in time to hear the keel grate upon the sand, and to see a slight figure in black spring out.

A rush of sudden, awful hope held him silent and motionless as the girl came nearer, and now he could see her face, and knew her—changed and haggard as she was—for his own dear love and tried to speak, but failed miserably.

He saw the dark eyes wet with tears, the quivering, tender mouth, and then he felt her arms about his neck, her face hidden on his breast, and heard her dear voice—changed, too, and broken—yet, oh! most sweet—saying,—

"Quentin, I have come back to die—to die of my love and my shame!"

The youth's heart stood still for fear, but he did not unclasp her clinging arms; he did not repulse her in any way. It mattered little to him what had passed since they parted; he only knew he loved her with a love that could never die.

"Quentin," she whispered, "they call me the child of sin—is it true? Oh, my friend, is it true?"

He knew then that she was still pure and good, and taking her by the hand led her gently and silently towards his uncle's house.

CHAPTER VIII.

"COME home," was the message Outram received from Sir Blount about a month after the incidents related in the last chapter. Several letters had been despatched; but as he was wandering from place to place, they had failed to reach him.

So now, believing his uncle was acting merely from caprice, he determined to assert his independence by travelling homewards by easiest stages.

And so at last he came to Antwerp, and spent a day in admiring the fortifications, the magnificent cathedral and various museums; and returning to his hotel was told that a gentleman waited to see him.

Laughing inwardly, because he believed his visitor to be Sir Blount, he ran lightly up to his room, and, entering, found himself confronted by a handsome young stranger, who bowed with almost foreign courtesy.

"You are Mr. Pembroke?" questioningly. "I have come from Arrahdown to see you, and it is a wild-goose chase you have led me."

"From Arrahdown! Then you are Quentin Derrick! What is your errand—is anything wrong with Mavourneen? Are you her messenger?"

"Much is wrong; but she did not send me. She does not know the reason for my absence; but if you really love her you must come with me at once. She is very ill."

"Ill! Can it be possible that was what my uncle's message meant? Why did not Mrs. Carr send for me?"

"Because Mavourneen is at Arrahdown, and you have kept so long silent that I feared her and story had changed your love."

"What sad story do you refer to?" rising, and hastily tossing his things into a portmanteau. "I am in total ignorance of your meaning."

Word by word Quentin told him all that Judith had done, watching him very keenly the while, and finished with the words,—

"Now tell me truly, Mr. Pembroke, does this tale make any difference to your attachment?"

"No," indignantly. "I believe Judith Carr has trumped up the whole story for her own purposes; and even should it prove true Mavourneen is not to blame, and when she is my wife she will be secure from contempt."

Quentin put out his hand, frankly.

"You're a good fellow, Pembroke, and as I cannot win Mavourneen myself, I am glad she is to marry you."

That night they left Antwerp together, Outram having sent an explanatory message to Sir Blount, and long before the journey ended the young men were fast friends.

As they walked up the steep path leading to Father O'Donoghue's house a figure which looked familiar to Outram ran to meet them, and a few moments later he recognised Carrie Carr, who looked unusually handsome with the bright flush on her cheeks, the great light in her honest eyes.

"I knew you would come," she cried, catching Outram's hands in hers enthusiastically. "I told Quentin so; but he scarcely believed me. He thought no Englishman could be trustworthy. And now I must run away and prepare my patient for the meeting."

"Does she not know of my coming? Could she doubt me?" Outram said, painfully.

"Great Scott! do you suppose we told her! Why, she would have forbidden us to act at all! No, we kept our own counsel. Was it likely Quen and I could see her die of a broken heart just because a malicious woman told her lies! It's no use pinching me, Quen, I will call a 'spade a spade,' and it is a pity if one can't abuse one's own sister."

"Is she very ill?" Outram asked, in a hoarse, strained voice.

"Yes. There, don't look so worried; you will be her cure. You see, the thought of what she is pleased to call her shame has gone very near to breaking her heart. But, oh! Outram—I mean, Mr. Pembroke—I got quite a nice letter from Sir Blount this morning, and he begs that as soon as Mavourneen is well enough we shall all go together to Pembroke Hall, as he has an important secret to tell us. He has discovered that Kathleen's mother was really married; but I thought I would give you the pleasant task of telling her this. Now excuse me; I must go before—it would never do to startle Mavourneen in her present weak state," and she at once suited the action to the word.

Just outside Mavourneen's door she paused a moment and leaned her head against the wall, whilst a great sob rose to her lips, but she choked it back bravely, and, lifting herself erect, entered the sick-room with a smile on her face.

"Mavourneen," she said, gently, "Outram has come."

The poor wasted little hands were flung out in wild entreaty.

"Oh! I cannot see him! I cannot see him!" she cried. "It is cruel to ask it. Don't you know I cannot meet his eyes for very shame!"

And then she saw him standing in the open doorway, his face aflame with love, and she tried to hide her eyes from him, but Carrie would not allow that. She lifted her in her strong young arms, and bade Outram come in.

There was such pity in his eyes, such love and tenderness, as they rested on the lovely wasted face, the recumbent figure, that she knew that her sorrowful story had not had power to shake his faith or his devotion.

"Mavourneen," he said, "how could you doubt me!" and was rudely interrupted by Carrie.

"Wait a minute before you go into raptures over each other. I'll just fix the pillows and then

make myself scarce. And, young man, tell her the good news first."

Judith and Mrs. Carr were driving towards Pembroke Hall in Sir Blount's own carriage; they had wondered a little over the queer invitation to dine with him, and Judith laid the "flatteringunction to her soul" that this was but a prelude to a proposal.

In his note he had said, "I will have a few friends to meet you, and may I beg the charming Mrs. Carr to be hostess, as unfortunately I have no wife to do the honours, and it is my sincere desire that she will often grace my table in the future."

"That," thought Judith, "evidently means he trusts she will one day be his mother-in-law. Well, I have played for high stakes, and have no doubt of my ultimate success."

As if to substantiate her hopes Sir Blount himself met them in the hall.

"My dear Miss Carr, I am delighted to receive you. Mrs. Carr, you have given me great pleasure. Pray follow me to the drawing-room; I have prepared a little surprise for you."

He flung open the door as he spoke, and ushered them in. A lady and a gentleman were sitting in close converse, and as they entered the lady sprang up with a glad little cry and threw her arms about Mrs. Carr.

"You dear old duck, aren't you delighted to see me again! Oh, yes! open your eyes wide with astonishment. I returned last night so muffled up that even you would not have known me, and Sir Blount insisted I should come here and pave the way for a still greater surprise," and then she turned to her sister with a cold, "How do, Judith! You don't look too glad to see me! Why, ma, you're crying! and pray allow me to introduce Mr. Quentin Derrick."

Judith experienced a little pang of doubt and a vague fear that all was not well, but she went through the introduction with a smiling face and such gracious condescension that Carrie almost violated all rules of etiquette by breaking into an ungovernable fit of laughter.

Sir Blount looked often and impatiently at his watch, and was evidently relieved when the door once more opened to admit Outram and Mavourneen. Judith gave a great start, and her proud face paled as she wondered by what trickery she had been outwitted. She clenched her hands and waited in apparent calmness for the dénouement she felt was inevitable.

Sir Blount took Mavourneen by the hand and led her up to Judith.

(Continued on page 41.)

MY SWEETHEART.

—102— CHAPTER XLVI.

PAULA slept peacefully for the first time that night. She had told all to Mildred, and she said to herself over and over again, as she nestled her curly head on the pillow, that Mildred would surely find some way for her out of the labyrinth of difficulty in which she found herself.

And all that night Mildred paced the floor of her room until the grey dawn struggled in through the window, crying out to Heaven to show her some way to save poor, hapless Paula.

Where would it all end? And she shuddered as she thought how true the lines were:

"Ah! what a fatal web we weave
When first we practice to deceive!"

It was worse than even she had thought. She realised, with horror too great for words, how pitifully Paula was in Pierce Dudley's power.

She had only one week of time to think it all out.

One—two—three days passed, and although Mildred was outwardly calm, the terror in her soul was growing greater.

It was pitiful to note how Paula trusted to her and looked to her for assistance.

Each day brought Gregor Thorpe. He was so gay, so light-hearted, so debonaire!

Mildred trembled when she thought of how near he stood to the brink of a terrible tragedy. She never forgot one afternoon and the strange events that accrued from it.

Gregor had driven up with his prancing bays to take Paula out for a drive.

She had laughingly refused him; and when Mildred remonstrated with her, declaring she ought to accompany him for at least a drive through the park, to woe back some of the wild-rose colour to her cheeks, she whispered in an undertone to Mildred.

"You know I dare not. He might see me."

Gregor looked disheartened.

"Why will you not accompany me? Is it because you find no pleasure in driving with me any more?"

He looked at her wistfully. His honest eyes grew dim with pain; his face grew white.

"I hope you are not beginning to grow jealous, Gregor," she pouted. "I could not endure that, you know."

"I cannot help but admit it, Paula," he said, frankly. "When a man loves as deeply as I do, he trembles at the slightest shadow. Your smile is my heaven of happiness!"

"I wish your happiness did not depend so entirely on my smile," she said, tapping her little alighted foot on the roses of the velvet carpet.

"It is too late to remedy that now," replied Gregor.

She saw the grieved look in his face and the shadow that lay in his eyes. They touched her heart, and she hastened to charm them away.

Gregor was enchanted. She had but to smile at him, to give him a look of kindness, to evince the least sign of affection for him, and all was well. She was so completely queen of his heart, soul, and mind that she could do with him just what she would.

He surrendered himself to the charm. He was more happy than words can tell. There was no coldness in her manner, no shadow lay between them save the little shadow of girlish reserve—some little variation of spirit. She was his own love, beautiful, tender, and true.

Seated by her side, he told her all his hopes and fears.

It had seemed so very strange that she had refused so steadily of late to go out of the house with him, she who was so soon to be his bride. He told her how he had fancied that her love was leaving him; that she was changing to him; that she was caring less for him. Now he was delighted to find that she was all that was most kind, most amiable, and winning.

He remained until the shadows of evening fell, despite the impatience of the horses.

Then, unwillingly enough, he rose to go. Mildred held out her hand to him with a grave, anxious look. Ah, if he but knew!

"Good-night," said Gregor in a low voice. "Although Paula refused to go riding with me, and a lovers' quarrel seemed imminent, we have bridged over our differences, and the sun is shining for me again."

"Heaven grant that it may always so shine," said Mildred, fervently.

Then she turned away from him abruptly. There were times when she could not bear those outward evidences of his love for Paula—he who had once been her own lover.

"How he idolizes her!" she thought. "Poor Gregor! he has no life apart from her. It is pitiful to see him."

As he ran lightly down the steps and sprang into his carriage, Paula and Mildred watched him from the lace-draped window; but he saw only one face.

He raised his hat from his bonny curls with a graceful salute to Paula, a happy smile lighting up his face. An instant later, the dusk of the night had swallowed him up.

Paula turned from the window and threw herself into Mildred's arms.

"It is but four days to my wedding-day, Mildred," she panted. "Have you thought of any way to save me from—from that other one?"

"I will save you, my darling," murmured Mildred, huskily, "or perish in the attempt."

And she clasped her beautiful, wilful sister in her arms, bravely keeping back the tears from her dark, sad eyes.

"Do you know," whispered Paula, huddling closer to Mildred's side, "I quite fancied I saw a dark shadow dart behind one of the trees across the way just as Gregor ran down the steps. If Pierce Dudley but dreamed that I had not parted from my lover as he bid me to do, he would follow Gregor and kill him. That would be the first step in his vengeance towards me."

"You are nervous and fanciful to-night," said Mildred, soothingly. But she could not allay Paula's fears.

Another day, and yet another. It was now Paula's wedding-morn. How clear it dawned—how brightly the sun shone in the blue azure sky!

Surely if that foretold happiness, she might laugh at the deadly fear at her heart. She was to be married at high noon, and ere that same sun sank in golden glory in the west, she would be far away with Gregor as his bride. Let Pierce Dudley find them then if he could.

Paula was quite startled at the white face with which Mildred greeted her that morning. There were great circles under the dark eyes, and there were heavy lines of care about the tender mouth.

Paula looked at her anxiously.

Could it be that Mildred was grieving in secret over the loss of one who had been all the world to her? And a sudden pang shot through Paula's heart at the thought of her despicable action in taking him from gentle, patient Mildred loving him as she knew her sister did, though noble Mildred uttered no word.

She had fought her hard, desperate battle long ago. Only Heaven and the pitying angels who had heard and witnessed the bitter throes of that aching heart knew what that struggle had been to noble, patient Mildred.

It was not this, however, that caused Mildred to look so wretched on this bright, eventful, sun-light morning.

A strange, dread presentiment haunted her.

Several times during the two or three days just passed, Mildred had observed a dark figure passing and repassing the house on the other side of the street that tallied exactly with the description Paula had given her of Pierce Dudley, disguised as he now was as Count Orlando.

But she dare not inform Paula of this, as it would alarm her.

If a crisis should occur at the eleventh hour, how should she save her sister?

Paula's marriage was to take place at noon.

She could not breathe freely until after the hour was passed.

Paula was not to meet Dudley until eight o'clock that evening; his suspicions would not be aroused until after the hour had come and gone and had not brought her.

Paula had carefully planned that no carriages nor guests should arrive to awaken Dudley's curiosity, in case Fate should lead him past the house at that auspicious hour.

He would take no notice of the plain cab that would draw up before the door, receive the bridal couple in their plain travelling dress, and bear them swiftly away on their journey.

But, ah me!

"The best laid plans of mice and men gang aft aglee!"

It was quite two hours before the time set for the wedding that destiny most cruel drew Pierce Dudley down the avenue.

Babette, Paula's new French maid, was just tripping forth from the basement door of the brown-stone mansion.

She recognized the French count at once, and blushed and half curtsied coquettishly.

Dudley recognized the maid just as quickly, and a satisfied smile crept about the corners of his dark, moustached lips.

"You are in a hurry, Babette!" he said, stopping short.

"Yes," she answered, in her pretty broken accent, "and well I may be, sir, for it is my lady's wedding-day."

Dudley flushed; he was surprised. He had thought Paula was so anxious that no one should know of their marriage just yet.

She had said to him that it must be kept a profound secret. Even her maid must not know.

"How were you so clever as to find it out, Babette?" he asked, curiously.

"It is no secret, sir," returned the maid. "Mr. Thorpe wanted a magnificent wedding, with five hundred guests and a grand display; but my lady shrank from it, and wanted it as quiet as possible, but I must not stand here idly chatting, sir. I have an errand to perform. I must hasten to return, for the wedding takes place at noon."

A fierce imprecation broke from Pierce Dudley's lips; but the maid did not hear it.

She had sped like a fawn down the avenue, and Dudley was left alone with the startling intelligence that had come to him so opportunely and so unexpectedly.

"So that is your game, is it, my beautiful schemer," he cried, clenching his hands with rage. "You shall not become Gregor Thorpe's bride at noon to-day. I will shoot him dead at your feet first."

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE hands of the pearl and gold clock in Paula's sumptuous boudoir pointed to eleven.

Babette, the deft little French maid, was busily putting the finishing touches to her mistress's toilet.

"You make such a beautiful bride, my lady," she said, admiringly; "but your face is deathly pale."

"I shall be glad when it is over," muttered Paula, sotto voce.

At that moment Mildred entered, and she noticed that which Babette had just remarked—the extreme pallor of Paula's face.

She went up to her and took her in her arms, and bent her noble head over her.

"Paula, my darling!" she murmured.

"I feel so nervous," gasped the girl. "I start at every sound. A few moments since, when I heard a ring in the lower corridor and the hasty tramping of feet, I thought I should drop dead with fear. I was afraid it was Pierce Dudley."

"Have courage, Paula. You must make haste and dress, dear. Gregor has already arrived, and he is the most impatient bridegroom imaginable," she added, with a smile. "He wishes to see you just one moment before the clergyman comes, and he may be here at any moment."

"I am all ready," said Paula, catching up her superb bouquet and turning toward the door.

"But my lady, you have forgotten your bridal-veil. Oh, it is an awful omission, they say, for a bride to forget her wedding-veil. I knew of a bride once who—"

"Hush!" commanded Mildred, sternly.

Paula had huddled close to Mildred's side, trembling like an aspen leaf swept by a heavy wind, and she caught her breath with a short, hard gasp.

"Let her speak, Mildred," she cried out, piteously. "I want to hear what happened to that other bride who forgot her wedding-veil, and was about to go down without it."

"No, be warned Paula; do not, I beg of you, my darling, listen to gruesome tales. Your thoughts should be as bright as the sunshine outside."

"There is no sunshine outside, Mildred. See, dark clouds have lowered, and it has commenced to snow heavily. And don't you hear the wind moaning like a banshee down the chimney? Look how big the flame burns in the grate, and the sparks that splutter out die away with a sharp, hissing sound. It is a warning, Mildred! Let her tell what happened to the other bride—I must know."

Mildred's heart grew faint at this, but she dared not oppose Paula in what seemed so trifling a matter.

Babette hung her head, and said, slowly,—

"It is an uncanny tale, my lady. The bride was young and fair, like yourself. I was an under-servant in the house, and was watching her

maid in arranging her toilet. Everything was ready save the fastening of the bridal-veil with the orange-wreath.

Suddenly her bridesmaids called for her to hasten.

"I am keeping them waiting," she cried. "Hand me my bouquet, quick!"

"And before anyone could interfere, she had caught it up, and with a bright and merry laugh danced through the velvet portieres into the adjoining room, where her bevy of chattering bridesmaids were awaiting her.

"I am ready, girls," she cried, gaily. "We must not keep them waiting."

"Oh, look!" they all cried out in chorus, "the bride has forgotten her wedding veil!"

"And the bridesmaids looked at each other with blank, awful faces.

"Why, sure enough!" she cried; "but that will only take one moment."

"And, with a laugh, she was back in her boudoir again. But no smile came to the faces of the bridesmaids, and they huddled together, looking eagerly, fearfully into each other's eyes.

"She does not know," they whispered. "Do not breathe a word to cast a gloom upon her on her wedding-day!"

"By this time, enveloped in her bridal-veil, she joined them again, and the bridal party proceeded down the grand-stairway where the carriages were waiting.

"And to the sound of the organ they filed up the aisle to the altar where the minister awaited them.

"There was a great hush in the vast church as the words were uttered that bound these two fond lovers to each other while their lives should last.

"The bridegroom stooped and kissed his bride, and murmured something very like: 'My own—my own at last!'"

"Then suddenly a dark-eyed girl who had been seated, hidden in a pew, sprang quickly to her feet.

"I give you these," she said, holding out a spray of white flowers towards him. "They are my wedding-gift to you!"

"He took them hesitatingly from her hand. How could he refuse, with so many eyes bent upon him, and knowing so many there knew that he had been this dark-eyed girl's lover once?"

"He raised the fatal flowers, and bent his handsome head over them, inhaling their sweet, subtle perfume.

"The next instant a terrible cry rang through the church, and the bridegroom fell at the bride's feet, dead, with the fatal white flowers clinched in his rigid hand.

"Ah! but there was wild commotion, and over it all rang the shrill, clear voice of the dark-eyed girl.

"I vowed that he should never jilt another, and I have kept my word. I have taken him from her; my mission in life is ended. I lived but for this one purpose. I have brooded over it night and day!"

"And a wild, shrill laugh rang through the church that made the blood run cold in the veins of all who heard it.

"They knew an angry Heaven had taken quick vengeance upon her for her terrible crime.

"She had gone mad—quite mad.

"The bride had swooned. They carried her back to the house, and she never spoke again. She soon joined her lover in that realm where there is no parting, no jealous rivals or tragedies because of disappointed love.

"The bridesmaids all declared, whenever they told the story, that it had all come about through that unlucky mishap of forgetting her bridal-veil."

Paula's face had grown white as death as she listened.

"I shall never worry till I come to the bridge," she said, bravely enough.

"That is right, my darling," returned Mildred; and she turned away, quite thrown off her guard.

Paula glanced quickly about her, and saw that she was not observed; then, quick as a lightning's flash, she drew from a cushion a long, thin silver pin, and hid it in the corsage of her dress.

"If anything should happen, I will bury this to the hilt in your bosom," she told herself, with a pitiful quivering of the white lips, "and that will end all!"

"Come, my darling," said Mildred; "are you not ready?"

She started guiltily, and murmured a low "Yes. But I must have one moment by myself, Mildred, to collect my thoughts. If you and Babette would but go, I—I will join you in ten minutes at furthest."

Babette glided from the room, and slowly Mildred turned away. Such a request was but natural, she thought.

Paula needed a few short moments to quiet the tremulous beating of her heart and still her throbbing nerves. She closed the door after her softly.

Left to herself, Paula paced excitedly up and down the room. What strange fads drew her towards the window! Ah! Heaven have mercy!

Standing directly across the street was the tall figure of a man, and that man Pierce Dudley!

The trees, the tall figure, and the palatial mansions across the way seemed to swim before her eyes.

Her heart seemed to burn as though it had been touched by flame. In that one instant she lived a life-time of horror.

She strained her eyes and looked eagerly again. There could be no mistake. Despite the fast-falling snow, she knew every line of his figure, and her heart almost stopped beating.

What is the name of the most high Heaven did he want there!

She saw him run quickly across the street and ascend the broad flight of stone steps.

"Oh, Heaven! oh, Heaven! he must not ring that bell!"

In an instant she had caught up Babette's large dark cloak and enveloped herself in it, head and all.

He must not see her in that bridal-robe. Down the broad corridor her feet fairly flew, and she flung open the door herself just as his hand was stretched out to ring the bell.

"Stop!" she cried out, pantingly. "What in Heaven's name has brought you at this hour? Stop! don't ring the bell! I—I cannot grasp the fact that it is really you!"

"Yes, it is I. I cannot be surprised that you do not find a warmer welcome for me. I can understand your agitation when the thought occurs to me how cleverly you had planned to deceive me."

"What has brought you?" she gasped, hoarsely.

He laughed aloud, and a great terror seized her. All the household would hear.

Oh, merciful Heaven!—what if Gregor should hear and know that voice! She caught his arm with ice-cold hands.

"They will hear you!" she cried, in an agony of terror.

"That does not matter to me in the least," he replied, with an insolent smile on his lips.

"Come this way," she panted. "I want to talk to you, but not here—not here! Come to my boudoir. No one will know."

He followed her with the smile still on his lips. She led the way up a dark spiral stairway but little used, inwardly wishing that he would fall dead at every step he took.

Coming in from the light, he could not see the way distinctly; but he soon saw one thing; at several of the landings there was no balustrade, and a step out of the way would be fatal and precipitate him down to the marble corridor on the main floor; and it was difficult work, too, keeping pace with the dark figure flitting so rapidly on before him.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

How suspicious was the beautiful blue-and-gold boudoir into which she ushered him.

Dudley looked keenly about him, telling himself silently that no royal princess born to the purple could have a more dainty apartment. But his musings were brought to a sudden end by

Paula turning to him with a set white face, and saying out hoarsely:

"Now we are where no one can hear us. Tell me why you are here, Pierce Dudley!"

"You do not ask me to be seated," he remarked; "but I presume you will not object if I make myself thoroughly at home, will you, my dear!"

She looked at him with stormy eyes, her white lips twitching most piteously.

"You wonder why I am here at this most inopportune hour, do you not, Paula?" he went on, tauntingly; "but," he added, with a sneer, "it ought to be patent to you. Your little game was to have been very nicely managed. It was a thousand pities that it fell through at the eleventh hour. You were to have been married to Gregor Thorpe to-day, and you had arranged to marry me afterwards. It was dramatically arranged. It is very sad that it should have failed."

He quite thought she would drop in a dead faint at his feet, she looking so ghastly and her eyes looked so wild.

"Will you not sit down opposite—if not beside—me, Paula?" he asked. "We could converse better—more at ease."

"I prefer to stand," she retorted, idly, still looking at him with those steady-blue glittering eyes.

"I bow to your pleasure, my dear," he returned, mockingly; "but what a mistake you made in not being an actress. You would have taken the world by storm, you can act a part so well."

She looked at him steadily.

"Now that you are here tell me what you want," she whispered, hoarsely.

"My demands are few, my fair Paula," he returned. "You are to be married to-day, according to your arrangement, to my grave, handsome cousin, Gregor Thorpe, according to mine, nothing of the sort will happen; but you will give Mr. Thorpe his dismissal and marry me instead—at noon."

"I shall do nothing of the kind," she answered.

"Yes, you will. You will find that alternative, bad as it is, better than the fate that awaits you if you refuse. I grant you that it is mortifying that your arrangements have gone so far. It is your own fault. You will find yourself in a great dilemma. You should have known better than to have attempted to play me false when I hold you so firmly in my power. You must send a note to Thorpe at once, and tell him that you have changed your mind. Certainly that is a lady's prerogative even at the eleventh hour."

"You have it all arranged very nicely," she said, sarcastically, her lips curling scornfully.

He settled back comfortably in the luxurious blue-and-gold easy chair and looked at her.

"I do not mind your contempt—not the least in the world, my fair Paula," he said, nonchalantly.

"I repeat, lest you may not have understood me fully, that you must write a note to your impatient lover, and tell him there will be no wedding to-day. Society will not be shocked at this turn of affairs, for, fortunately, it was all arranged with the strictest secrecy—under the rose—as they say. You can go on the continent, to America—anywhere you like, and I will join you in a few weeks. Then my wooing can begin, and I will marry you. It is quite a concession," he went on, quickly, "that I do not insist upon the carrying out of your original promise to marry me to-day."

She laughed a mocking, bitter laugh that made the angry blood leap like fire in his veins.

"I shall not marry you to-day, or ever!" she cried, forgetful, in her wild despair, of the power he held over her, and that it might have saved her if she had used diplomacy with him; for he was a most dangerous foe.

"Do you dare mean it?" he cried, springing furiously from his chair.

She raised her head and looked at him fearlessly.

"Yes, I mean it," she said. "Nothing on this earth can tempt me to marry you. I will die first! You may as well know it first as last!"

She never saw anything in the wide world so



"AH, HA! MY PEERLESS SWEETHEART, PAULA, HOW MAGNIFICENTLY THESE ROBES BECOME YOU!" SHARLED DUDLEY.

horrible as the face he turned towards her. It was fairly transformed by rage and desperation.

"Take care how you goad me on, Paula!" he cried, warningly. "You will rue what you are saying. Remember, your words are making a fiend incarnate of me."

"My words have not to make you that, for you are that already, and have been that ever since I had the misfortune to look first upon your face," she said.

"You thought it very grand to be noticed by me in those days when you were only Paula Garstin, working in my uncle's business at a pound a week, and I had charge of it. You did not hesitate to put yourself in my way, and make the flushes come and go on your cheeks at my approach. You have forgotten all that now, I dare say; but your house is built on the sand; your high hopes are castles in the air. With one word I can place you on the gallows!"

The words ended in a hiss, as he stooped down and whispered them shrilly in her white, cold ear.

She turned to her enemy. To her, standing there listening, those horrible words seemed like a wild, weird, dark dream.

Suddenly he saw the long, dark cloak wrapped about her, and he wondered vaguely why she wore it.

Was it a travelling cloak? Was the ceremony over, and was she dressing for a journey?

With a sudden movement he caught at it, and in drawing back from him in alarm it fell into his hands, and an expression perfectly satanic flashed over his face.

"In your bridal robes!" he cried. "Ah, ha! my peerless sweetheart, Paula, how magnificently they become you! Seeing you standing there in all the finery of your trailing satin gown, your bridal-veil, and the orange-blossoms crowning your beautiful head, sets my heart and soul on fire. I will not wait for you days or weeks—upon my soul, I will not! You shall marry me at once. You shall be married in those bridal robes that become you so fatally, magnificently

well, and I shall be your bridegroom. You might have had a respite if I had not beheld you in them; but standing there, you set my brain, my very soul, on fire! Write the note that will send Thorpe away at once while I am here, and wring for your maid to take it to him."

"I refuse to do it," she answered, steadily.

"You dare not!" he cried.

"I do dare," she answered, in a voice terribly calm.

He took a folded paper from his pocket and waved it above her head.

"This says that you will never be so mad as to refuse," he cried. "If you did, Gregor Thorpe and the whole world should know within the hour that by your own written confession you killed Mr. Barton for his gold—you, the beautiful impostor—the glorious creature who was on the eve of entrapping the noble, honourable Gregor Thorpe into a marriage with you. He would never marry you if he but knew that. No man in his senses would, my beautiful Paula."

"I would creep up to him and cry out to him to let me die in the shelter of his arms," she whispered, more to herself than to him, "and—my one prayer in this world would be granted. When the end of my poor life had come I would die looking on his face;" and a tender light came over her strained eyes that enraged Dudley, for it showed him more eloquently even than her words how she loved Gregor Thorpe.

"You will never die looking on his face! I would kill you first—here and now!" he cried, fiercely, fairly beside himself.

And he grasped her by the white throat, not realising what he was doing in his blind, mighty wrath.

"Gregor! oh, save me!" she articulated, faintly.

She struggled desperately in his cruel grasp, and his hands closed the firmer around the poor, beautiful white throat.

"I shall have that which you refused me in

the boat on that memorable night!" he cried, mercilessly—"a kiss. You are soon to marry me; it is my right."

Paula struggled frantically in his grasp. The beautiful white face was so near him! Why should he not kiss those lovely lips? He laughed, but the angry blood surged to his brain.

Where was the lover who would have given every drop of blood in his heart to have saved her! Where was the sister who would have followed her even through the gates of death to have shared her burden of pain or saved her one pang?

She tried to cry out to them, but he held her close in his arms. The breath was leaving her body, and each instant she struggled so cruelly the clasp of those hands closed tighter about her neck. Suddenly—Heaven pity her!—she thought of the long, thin, silver pin hidden in her bosom.

(To be continued.)

BOKNOLM, an island of the Baltic Sea, ninety miles east of Zealand, is formed of magnetic rock. They so effect the compass that navigators, when in their vicinity have to rely upon stationary objects for steering guides. One submerged rock is so charged with magnetism that the compass on a vessel passing over it dips perpendicularly downward.

THE Chinese are peculiarly a nation without nerves. The Chinaman can write all day, he can work all day, he can stand for a whole day in one position, weaving, hammering gold, or cutting ivory, without once being attacked by nervousness. This peculiarity makes itself apparent in early youth. The Chinaman can bear any kind of bodily exercise. Sport and play are to him unnecessary labour. He can sleep anywhere and in any position—amid thundering machines, deafening noises, the cry of children, or the wrangle of grown people; on the ground, in bed, or on a chair.



"I WONDER YOU ARE NOT ASHAMED TO LOOK AT ME, MISS GREEN!" BEGAN LILIAN, EXCITEDLY.

NAMELESS.

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CHAPTER VII.

THE next day Lillian spent entirely in her lonely attic. She had a strange confidence that Miss Ainslie's recommendation would be effectual. It seemed doubting her friend in need to seek after other engagements until she heard the result of the letter to Lady Dacres, and some instinct, which she could not have explained, made the lonely girl shun the confectioner's where she had met her knight. It would seem, she thought, in her maidenly modesty, like trying to foist herself upon his notice to go there again.

She watched anxiously for the post on Saturday morning, the third day after her visit to Leckenhams, but no letter came for her. She thought, with a sigh, that if she did not hear from Miss Ainslie by Monday she must recommence her weary search for employment; and as she sat, half-perished with the cold, in her humble room, sewing away industriously, her hopes were not so bright as they had been the day before.

She was weary of work—plain sewing is infinitely dreary when one has no pleasant theme for thought. She was wondering, with a vague yearning, how long Earlsmeare would be without a master, when a knock came at the door—a determined rap, as though the person from whose knockles it emanated much objected to be kept waiting.

Lillian's first thought was the post. It was barely ten, but she had no precise idea of the time of the second delivery. She sprang to the door and threw it open, but she did not find Mrs. Matthews' buxom figure with the tallman in her hand, but the slight, trim-looking mistress of Rose Bank, very comfortably dressed in a winter costume, trimmed with fur.

She said nothing of the steep ascent, she never remarked upon the lack of fire, or the blue tint of Lillian's fingers; she took a seat upon the foot

of the bed, which, seeing there was no second chair, was prudent, and remarked, calmly,—

"You see I have come to return your visit, Miss Green."

"It is very kind of you."

"Saturday is my holiday, and I often came up to town. Well, I expect you are wondering what news I have for you!"

A bright colour came into the girl's pale cheeks.

"Oh! have you really heard?"

"Really. I might have posted a letter to you last night, but as I was coming to town I preferred to call. Well, the thing is settled; Lady Dacres declares herself quite satisfied, and will expect you as soon as you can go."

Lillian threw herself on the ground, and, with pretty, foreign graces, kissed Miss Ainslie's hand.

The letter drew it away.

"I'm not the Queen, child! Don't treat me like royalty. Well, how soon can you be ready? I hope you will be pretty comfortable there. If you like children you may get on, for I have heard the little Dacres are remarkably pretty—though spoilt, of course."

Her eyes travelled round the room; she saw the extent of Lillian's wardrobe, for there was no chest of drawers, and the small portmanteau was the only receptacle for clothes. She took in the state of the case at a glance.

"I think you had better come out with me and do some shopping, Miss Green."

The girl's blue eyes met hers doubtfully.

"I will see to that. What's the use of being an old maid with a few savings if one cannot help other people? Lady Dacres offers a hundred a-year, so you can pay me back out of your salary. Tut! as Lillian began to protest; "I shall not be trusting you a bit longer than I trust the parents of my pupils."

Under Miss Ainslie's judicious directions ten pounds were made to go further than ten pounds had ever gone before; then she conducted her companion to a restaurant—not the one—and made her eat a very good dinner. She then announced she must go home.

"Will you write to Lady Dacres and name the day for your arrival? I should make it Monday week, I think; you would hardly be ready before."

"I will write. Oh! Miss Ainslie, how am I to thank you!"

"Don't try. Then you will go down by the twelve o'clock train from Paddington. I hope you will get on comfortably; and, Miss Green,—have you any money?"

The question was abrupt, but poor Miss Ainslie had tried in vain to introduce it gradually. She was probably prepared for the answer, for she slipped a small purse into Lillian's hand.

"You can't go about without a shilling in your pocket!" she said, when the girl remonstrated; "and, as I said before, you can pay it back out of your first quarter's salary. Well, good-bye! Remember, we trust you."

And the stress on those three words was the only exhortation which she bestowed upon her protégée.

It seemed to Lillian fortune had at last smiled on her again; she was once more to be an inmate of an easeful home—once more to enjoy the comforts to which gentlewomen are accustomed. She certainly had heard very little of her employer, and still less of the duties required of her, but if will and effort could fulfil these they should not go undone; and in her gratitude she could hardly resist adding a promise to this effect to the little note in which she informed Lady Dacres of the date of her arrival.

A very busy week followed, Lillian's needle worked incessantly; and so time flew by until at last the morning came which was to launch her on her new life, and, punctually at half-past eleven, Lady Dacres' governess reached Paddington Station.

Early as it was someone was there before her. When her cab stopped Gay Ainslie was waiting to hand her out. It was he who directed the porters where to take her luggage, and who

seemed as if he had come there on purpose to take all care and trouble off her hands.

"Miss Green," he said, with the strange abruptness which he and his sister both possessed so strongly; "I want to speak to you. Your things will be quite safe; I have told the man to secure a seat for you as soon as the train comes up. Will you take a turn with me away from all this crowd?"

Wonderingly, Lillian obeyed him. Firstly, he was not a man whom any woman would readily have disobeyed; secondly, she owed him too much to cross his wishes.

But for some seconds he did not speak, he seemed to have a great difficulty in beginning what he had to say. At last, he asked—

"What has my sister told you about Lady Dacres?"

Lillian might have answered, "Very little," but she merely said Miss Ainslie had spoken of Lady Dacres as an old pupil.

"Ah!"

"She said the children were pretty."

"If your life is spent with them in the school-room you may be comfortable," he said, slowly; "but I told Kate Dacres Castle was the last place in the world for you—only she would not see it."

A faint flush coloured the girl's face.

"You think I am not good enough; but, indeed, I will try my best."

"I never said you were not good enough. Life is a very tangled web indeed at Dacres Castle, and I think it would be difficult even for a woman of the world to steer her way clearly, let alone a child like you."

It was a strange speech.

"I am older than I look; I am nearly nineteen!"

He smiled.

"Are you? That is not very old, Miss Green."

"And I shall be getting older every day."

"Older and more worldly-wise."

"Does it take much worldly wisdom to teach two little girls?"

"Yes, if they are ever to become fashionable young ladies!" cried Gay Ainslie, bitterly.

She looked at him in surprise.

"Forgive me," gazing into her deep blue eyes; "I did not mean to frighten you. In fact, I came here to try and give you some good advice; only I don't seem doing it. You see," abruptly,

"It may not be quite in my line to advise a young lady, only I feel somehow as though you were under my care. It is a strange fancy, isn't it?"

"Very; but I shall be very grateful for your advice."

"Then listen. Never was confidential with Lady Dacres—never tell her your troubles, and never listen to hers."

"Has she troubles?"

"Never mind that! Well, where was I? Oh! I remember. Do not mention our names, and never let Sir John know at whose recommendation you came to the Castle. It won't be a passport to his favour."

The train was up now; the warning bell had rung. Lillian remembered suddenly she had no ticket; Mr. Ainslie laughed as she mentioned it.

"I got that long ago!"

He led the way and showed her her umbrella, bag, and other small possessions, carefully stowed away in the corner of a first-class carriage. He handed her in, and then stood with raised hat as the train bore her rapidly from his sight.

It was a long journey and a tedious one. I appeal to anyone who has ever made the trip from Paddington to Chesham if it be not a wearying one. At this time, being winter, Lillian was robbed of the pleasures of scenery she might have enjoyed.

The beauty of the foliage, the lovely tints of the green, which make the glory of our west of England in summer time, were all absent now. It looked cold and desolate; and the girl, who from her foreign training was peculiarly alive to external things, turned from the window and tried to busy herself with the book Gay Ainslie

had placed in her hands. But whoever could read with any enjoyment at the very threshold of a new life! No one surely who was young and imaginative!

Lillian felt perplexed by Mr. Ainslie's warning. She could not make out the exact relations between Lady Dacres and the household at Rose Bank. If she had simply been his sister's pupil what could Guy have known of her?

There were nearly twenty years between him and his sister, so that the fact of Lady Dacres being the latter's pupil did not make her out particularly young. Besides, she could not be if she had children of twelve and thirteen. Then why should Sir John object to his wife's old friend?

It was all bewildering, and Lillian gave a sigh of relief, when, soon after five o'clock, the train stopped at Chesham Station, and she descended from the carriage feeling the first stage of her long journey was really over.

A tall footman accosted her.

"Are you the lady for Dacres Castle, ma'am?"

Lillian confessed that she was. It was like a breath of the old life when she found herself seated in a luxurious brougham, while two noble horses bore her quickly over the seven miles which separated the Castle from the dull, sleepy little town of Chesham.

The drive was very quick, almost before six the carriage had turned in at the lodge gates, and was dashing up the avenue. It was strange to enter such a house alone.

A crowd of servants were in the hall; but oh! how different was everything to when at Lord Earl's side she had first entered Earlsmeare. Here, no one welcomed her; no one addressed her.

It was only when she stood half irresolute, not knowing which way to turn, that an under-maid-servant appeared from some distant region, and proceeded to show her upstairs.

The girl led the way to a pleasant, well-furnished chamber, hung with chintz; a bright fire blazed in the grate, and wax candles burned on the dressing-table. Evidently the discomforts of which she had been warned would not arise from lack of provision for her creature well-being.

Her boxes stood at the foot of the bed, and the little maid volunteered her services in unpacking them.

"The housekeeper thought you would like your tea here to-night, ma'am; the young ladies have had theirs."

Lillian felt she would have postponed tea for the sake of seeing the children with whom her life was to be spent, but she did not propose it. She directed Mary's cares for her comfort, smoothed her bright hair, and sat down to tea with more appetite than she had felt for a long time.

Only when the girl appeared to remove the tray did she inquire the way to the schoolroom, and was ushered down a long corridor to an apartment which seemed quite isolated from the rest of the house. She pushed the door open and went in; two small, white-robed girls stood by the fire; they both looked up in surprise.

"You are not our governess!"

"Yes," said Lillian, quietly. "Why do you think I am not?"

The elder girl blushed and turned away, but the younger said, frankly,—

"You don't look old a bit! All our governesses wear spectacles, and don't have any hair!"

Lillian attempted to suggest spectacles and baldness were not indispensable to the art of tuition.

The children looked at her wistfully.

"I think you'll be nice," said Daisy, at last, putting out one small hand. "Shall you like us?"

"Very much, if you will let me."

"No one likes us," said Pansy, disconsolately. "You see, Miss Green, we're not boys!"

This fact was indisputable. "And papa hates girls!"

"Not really," said Lillian, gently. "Your papa must love you very much, dears."

"She won't let him."

"Who?"

"Mamma."

Lillian felt as if she was in an atmosphere of mystery. What could it mean? The statements were not like the confidential outpourings of children in momentary vexation; they were more like a clear declaration of facts—of something that everyone knew and they were getting quite used to.

At all risks she changed the conversation, and the strange little sisters had begun to chatter quite cheerfully to her, before a very grand nurse appeared and announced that it was their bedtime.

Left alone, the governess sat by the fire pondering a little on her new surroundings, when the door softly opened, and there stood before her what seemed a perfect vision of loveliness.

It was a girl about her own age, although she looked older—a daughter of the gods, so far as stature went; divinely tall, her figure of that wonderful voluptuous beauty so rare and so attractive; her hair was black as the raven's wing; her eyes were large and lustrous, their colour varying from violet to black, according to the mood which influenced her. She was a complete contrast to Lillian. Both were beautiful; but the delicate grace and loveliness of the governess almost paled before the bewitching, sensuous beauty of her companion.

And their dress, too, was different. Lillian wore a plain, soft, black cloth dress. The other was in white; long cloud-like draperies of white silk, looped here and there with bright pomegranate blossoms; jewels flashed on her white throat and rounded arms. She came up to Lillian's side with outstretched hand.

"I hope you are not very tired, Miss Green!"

Lillian took the hand, and made some courteous reply; the stranger drew up a low lounging chair and seated herself in it.

"Sir John has gone to sleep, and I am all alone. Have you made acquaintance with my daughters? Don't look surprised; didn't Kate Ainslie tell you I had the misery of being a step-mother?"

It was a revelation to Lillian; this beauteous vision was really the person she had been warned to mistrust. She was ready to accept Gay Ainslie's verdict in most things, but even at his bidding she could not think harshly of her lovely employer.

"I beg your pardon, Lady Dacres. I had no idea."

"Ah! Kate is prudence itself. I dare say she never told you that I used to live at Lockenham—that until six months ago it was my home!"

"Miss Ainslie never told me that."

"And you know them well!" not waiting for an answer. "You have been to Rose Bank; how is the dear old place looking?"

"I was there not a fortnight ago; it looked a happy home."

To her distress Lady Dacres sighed heavily as she answered,—

"It was that always. Ah! always. Oh! those were happy years I spent there, very happy. Kate was a little hard on me sometimes, but she has a heart of gold."

"I am sure she has."

"Do you know her well?" sharply.

"She has been very kind to me."

"Ah!"

A long silence. Lady Dacres sat looking into the fire, at last she asked,—

"And Kate never told you really that I was her cousin?"

"No."

Silence; then she added,—

"Perhaps she's ashamed of the connection. Have you known her long, Miss Green?"

"Not very long."

"It can't be very long. I have only been away six months, and I am sure I never heard your name."

"It is not six months yet since I returned to England," said Lillian, slowly.

"It does not take Kate Ainslie long to know people; she decides at once," meditatively, "and she always keeps to her first judgment. Now,

she always detested Sir John; don't look so distressed, Miss Green."

Lillian had to change the conversation by asking some question about the children.

"Oh! do what you like, I shall not interfere. I only want them kept out of my way."

A silence long and deep, so long that poor Lillian felt that she was positively rude in not breaking it, only she could think of nothing to say. At last Lady Dacres turned suddenly towards her, and mentioned a subject which was to be a vexed one between them for ever:

"Of course you have seen Guy Ainslie. What do you think of him?"

CHAPTER VIII.

BUT LILLIAN GREEN, to call her by the name which she had adopted, felt a strange confusion as Lady Dacres asked her opinion of Guy Ainslie. Somehow, even without his own words of warning, she would have hesitated to tell her sad history to this beautiful, imperious creature, whose loveliness had no touch of sadness, whose dark eyes seemed ready to read her through and through. How could she say to Lady Dacres, "I think Mr. Ainslie generous and noble," when she must not allege the reason for this opinion.

"Haven't you made up your mind?" asked my lady, good-naturedly; "really, Miss Green, you must have been very unobservant; my cousin Guy is the handsomest man you would meet with in a day's journey."

"Is he?" asked Lillian, absently; "you see I have only seen him twice."

"Poor old Guy!" reflectively. "How he used to lecture me when I lived at Rose Bank—how long ago it seems."

The governess did not think herself called upon to make any reply to this, as it was murmured very softly, almost as though meant only for the speaker's own ear. She waited a moment, and then again asked Lady Dacres her wishes respecting the children.

"I'm sure I don't know," said my lady, with a yawn. "So that you keep them out of my sight I don't much mind, only you must manage them yourself, and not come to me with any little worries. Why I sent to Kate to recommend me a governess was that those I chose myself were such utter failures. If you justify my cousin's opinion, Miss Green, you will have an easy time of it. I perfectly detest children; I'm sure I was never meant for a stepmother."

The days passed on, Christmas came with its sad memories; the new year dawned, and Lillian seemed to have settled down as a regular inmate of Castle Dacres. As its mistress had promised, she never interfered. Daisy and Pansy were left entirely to the care of their governess, and the two little maidens loved her with all their hearts; their artless affection, their winning ways, helping to soothe the heavy sorrow that had crept over Lillian's life.

When she had been three months at the Castle, and Sir John wrote her a cheque at his lady's request, she had the pleasure of sending back the money Kate Ainslie had lent her, she could not resist writing a few lines to tell of her gratitude for all the kindness shown her by the mistress of Rose Bank.

The reply was prompt, and it came from Guy, not from his sister—a simple, kindly letter such as any gentleman might have sent to his sister's friend without wronging his wife or *fiancée*, had he chanced to possess one, but yet that letter was the first breeze which stirred the tranquillity of Lillian's life at Dacres Castle.

The evening after she received it Lady Dacres entered the schoolroom. She was dressed as splendidly as when Lillian first beheld her; but the three months had wrought their changes. Now it was impossible for a keen observer to look at Lady Dacres and not see that she was unhappy, that all her luxuries, all her wealth, her husband's dotting love even could not satisfy her heart or fill the void in her life.

She had never been unkind to Lillian; she had never cast petty slights upon her governess. At first even she had been disposed to confide in the

girl recommended to her by her cousin; but Lillian did not respond to her advances, and so their intercourse had grown of a very formal and stately nature, only the haughty beauty never forgot that Miss Green was a lady, and invariably treated her as such. But to-night all was changed. No sooner had the children gone to bed than my lady entered, anger written on every feature of her lovely face, her cheeks white with rage, her eyes gleaming with scorn.

"I wonder you are not ashamed to look at me, Miss Green," she began, excitedly; "perhaps you thought as I left the matter until the children were gone, I meant to look over your deceit. If so, you were bitterly mistaken."

Lillian rose and looked full into the speaker's face. She never quailed before the glance of those angry eyes; she stood there calm and collected in her innocence, looking, despite her simple attire, despite her namelessness, to the full, as beautiful and as high born as my Lady Dacres.

"I have never deceived you, my lady."

Lady Dacres flashed one look of scorn at her.

"I hate lies."

"And I have told you none."

"I prefer the evidence of my own senses."

"Lady Dacres," said Lillian, with ample dignity, "the meanest criminal on Heaven's earth is allowed to know the charge brought against him. Surely you will tell me in what I have failed in my duty to your step-children since the day I entered your house?"

My lady looked surprised.

"Sit down," she said, imperatively.

"I would rather stand. Will you tell me the cause of my offence? In what have I deceived you?"

"The first night you came here here you told me you had only seen my cousin twice."

"I never saw Miss Ainslie but twice in my life. Will you appeal to her, Lady Dacres, if you doubt my word?"

"I should not care if you had seen Kate two hundred times!" returned Lady Dacres. "I am not alluding to her."

"To whom, then?"

"To the gentleman with whom it seems you correspond. Did you not tell me you had only seen him twice? You would not even admit his good looks, and yet it seems you are on sufficiently intimate terms to correspond with him!"

Lillian's brow cleared.

"Indeed it is the truth!" she said, quietly.

"I never saw Mr. Ainslie but twice, and when his letter came this morning I was as much surprised as you could be."

"Do you know that Guy hates writing!—that it is with the greatest persuasion he can be induced to write a letter!"

"I am very sorry he did violence to his inclinations on my behalf," said Lillian, lightly. "But really I could not help it. I would have waited quite patiently until his sister had time to answer my letter."

"Do you mean that he only wrote instead of Kate!—that he sent you a letter simply because she could not?"

"I mean that, Lady Dacres."

"And it was not a love-letter!"

The blood came rushing to the girl's fair cheeks.

"Why should you think such things?" she cried, indignantly. "Lady Dacres, I can assure you that I have never given a thought to love or lovers for months. I did not even know but what Mr. Ainslie was engaged. Whether he be or not can make no difference to me."

"He was engaged," said Lady Dacres, with a strange pathos. "That union fell through, but his whole heart was in it. I do not think he will ever care to take another wife after losing his first love."

"Did she die?" cried Lillian, her blue eyes full of sympathy. "How very sad."

"She did not die."

"Then they may come together yet!"

"I hope so."

Lady Dacres discovered she had been mistaken, and after a few civil phrases left the room; but,

alas! she had taken Lillian's peace of mind with her.

Never would the world be quite the same to her again. She had thought of Guy Ainslie with the warmest gratitude of her nature; she had felt that under Heaven she owed all to him.

Surely of all the world she ought most to rejoice at his happiness; and now, when she heard he had had a *fiancée* whom he loved with all his heart, a terrible sorrow seemed to fill her soul, and she could almost feel a sort of gladness that some obstacle deferred his bliss.

It was monstrous, it was ungrateful, it was wrong; but Lillian had erred, in all innocence; never, until she sat alone in the freighted pondering upon Lady Dacres' sudden anger, did the whole truth of her misfortune come home to her.

She had mistaken love for gratitude; she had accorded a girlish fancy to Sir Ronald Trevlyn; but she had given a woman's worship—a woman's heart—to the man who had come to her in her sorest need, Guy Ainslie, my lady's cousin.

In vain she checked herself, in vain she tried to think it a passing infatuation which she could conquer! Lady Dacres' accusation had opened her eyes to her one folly. She loved Guy now, she should love him till she died.

She wondered just a little to whom his love was given, and for whose sake Lady Dacres had been so suspicious of her; perhaps the future lady of Rose Bank was an intimate friend of Lillian's employer.

"They need not be alarmed," thought the poor girl sadly, as she went to her; "because he saved me from starvation and helped me in my direst need is no reason he should care for me. If my gratitude has deepened into love, if, having nothing else to care for, I have learned to love his memory, such a transformation will not take place with him. He will think of me kindly and pitifully, because men like him can't be hard upon a weak, defenceless girl; but no memory of me will disturb his peace; his thoughts will be with the *fiancée* whom fate may some day restore to him, not with the poor orphan girl his charity rescued from starvation—it may be even from a sorrow worse than death."

She took out the little note he had sent and determined to destroy it, since Lady Dacres evidently considered she had no right to it.

"DEAR MISS GREEN,—

"My sister will write to you in a few days; meanwhile she thanks you for your note and enclosure. We are both very glad you find yourself comfortable at Dacres Castle, and we quite hope that the next time you come to London we shall see you at Leckham."

"Yours very truly,

"GUY AINSIE."

It was so short, and so simple, that Lillian decided she might keep it without wronging anyone, and so she folded it away in a little old pocket book which had been her father's, and which in all the hurry and excitement of her flight from Earlsmead she had not forgotten to bring with her.

The next event of consequence was the departure of Sir John and Lady Dacres to London for the season.

"It will be very pleasant," said my lady, coming into the school-room, condescendingly to say good-bye to the governess. "I always wanted a season in town. Sir John would linger abroad so long after we were married that London was empty when we got back; and before I was married I was too—"

"Too young, perhaps!" said Lillian, pleasantly.

"Too poor, I think, I was going to say. Kate and Guy are not what is called rich, you see, and I was dependent on them for everything; besides they kept me shut up like a nun. I might never have met Sir John if I had not been staying with some of my father's friends last spring."

"It is only a pleasure deferred. I hope you will enjoy yourself, Lady Dacres."

"Thanks. Take care of yourself, Miss Green. Don't let those children worry you to death."

By-the-by, I shall see the Ainalles; have you any message?"

But Lillian thought of that winter's evening in that same room when Lady Dacres had brought a cruel charge against her. She could not, remembering that, send any message to Guy, and somehow, she did not like to send one to his sister and leave him out. My lady smiled a little derisively.

"Out of sight out of mind," she quoted, lightly. "I shall tell them that's what it is, and that Mr. Darby has quite succeeded in obliterating their image."

A faint, sick feeling stole over Lillian's heart. "Please do not say that, my lady! As to Mr. Darby, he is nothing in the world to me!"

"But he would like to be."

"Indeed you are mistaken."

"I have eyes. It seems that you have none. Why, Miss Green, unless you are the veriest coquette you must have known whom it is Mr. Darby comes here to see."

"I thought he came to talk to you about the poor people."

Lady Dacres gave a ringing little laugh.

"The only poor person he talks to me about is himself. He seems to think he's very much to be pitied for being endowed by fate with a very big rectory, and no one but himself to live there."

It was impossible for Lillian to mistake my lady's meaning. She was speechless from dismay.

"There, don't distress yourself," said the elder woman, merrily. "I only hope Mr. Darby won't bring things to a climax while we're away. What should we do about Daisy and Pansy?"

A great calm fell on the Castle when its master and mistress had departed. Lillian felt happier than she had done since she left Earlsmea.

It was pleasant to live at the beautiful old mansion and know there was no one there she need fear to offend. Lady Dacres inspired her with a kind of dread, even when most amiable. Life was far more peaceful with only the two little girls to break her solitude, and the three enjoyed the lovely summer weather, and made many a little excursion among the picturesque country which surrounds Chesham.

"If they would only stay away always," suggested Daisy, one night, "how very nice it would be!"

"But papa!" objected Pansy; "I should like to see papa sometimes!"

"Perhaps he would come," pondered Daisy; "but, oh, I would rather be without him than have mamma, too!"

"You should not speak like that, dear," said Lillian, though in her heart she quite agreed with the little speaker. "Lady Dacres is your mother now, and you ought to try to love her!"

"She doesn't love us!"

"You don't know. She has not much time to attend to you; but she has never been unkind to you, Daisy, or Pansy either."

Lillian thought she had scored a point in Lady Dacres' favour; for, indeed, she seldom troubled herself enough about the children to be unkind to them, or to interfere in any way with their amusements.

"You don't know," objected Pansy. "Once, before you came, she was dreadfully unkind. She slapped my hand right across with her riding-whip."

"Perhaps she did not mean to do it."

"She did! When I cried she said it served me right!"

"Then you had been very naughty."

"I don't know," said the child, doubtfully. "I meant to be very kind to her. Do you remember her locket, Miss Green?"

"Your mamma wears half-a-dozen lockets."

"But the one that is always on her chain—that she never forgets to wear!"

Lillian recollected it well. It was of oval shape, of plain dead gold, rather large in size, and thoroughly well made, but not to compare with dozens of my lady's other gems; yet it was never laid aside. In morning costume or evening robes that locket always kept its place.

"Well," went on the child, sadly, "we had

been for a walk with nurse, and coming back I saw something glittering in the avenue, and, of course, I picked it up, and it was mamma's locket. I asked the butler where she was, and ran in with it to her. I thought she would be so pleased."

And even at that distance of time there was a sad ring in the child's voice, as though she had not forgotten her disappointment.

"And wasn't she pleased?"

"Carrying it the spring came undone. I suppose it got loosened by falling, and so I could see inside. There was a gentleman's likeness, and, oh! Miss Green, he looked so good and kind, I am sure he must have been very nice!"

"And you gave it back to your mamma!"

"She was in her dressing-room. She had just come in from a drive, and I gave it to her open, just as it was. She hardly listened to where I found it. She just took up her whip and lashed my hand. I never shall forget the pain; and yet, somehow, it hurt me more that she should have done it just when I meant to please her."

From that moment Lillian never mentioned their stepmother to the children. She herself feared Lady Dacres almost as much as they did. The glittering eyes, the brilliant beauty, reminded her of her radiant fascinations of a serpent.

She had another trouble as the days grew longer. Mr. Darby seemed to have a marvellous knack of meeting her and the children in their evening walks. He was a handsome, genial young man, about thirty, with a comfortable rectory, and an income which was luxurious for a bachelor.

From the moment of their introduction he had treated Lady Dacres' governess with the utmost consideration, but never until my lady's broad hint had Lillian fancied what his wishes were.

And now, as evening after evening he met them and sauntered at their side among the beautiful country lanes, as she heard Pansy openly tell him, it was strange he always had to come their way, or Daisy exclaim how odd it was they always met him, a great fear came to the lonely girl.

He was young, high-born, and comparatively rich. He was handsome, generous, and true; but yet she knew perfectly that she should never feel for Archibald Darby anything but a calm friendship.

She who had been content to accept Ronald Trevlyn when she was an heiress, because she believed he loved her, now that she worked for her own bread meant to refuse a man ten times his superior in heart and feeling, and whose prospects were far, far brighter than any likely to be her own.

"I shall never love him," thought Lillian to herself; "and, oh, I hope he does not care for me! I never shall marry anyone—never, while I live!"

For, you see, she had learnt her own secret now. She knew she loved Guy Ainalle. She could never be aught to him. He would never guess her devotion, but, while her heart was his, she could never plight her troth to another man.

The moment she had dreaded came at last. One lovely July evening the little girls were invited to tea in the hayfield. The nurses would be in charge. They were altogether more suited to preside at the entertainment than Lillian, and so she profited by the rare leisure to take her sketching into the grounds and see if she could secure a distant view which had hitherto escaped her.

Absorbed in her occupation, she never heard the sounds of footsteps, she never knew she was no longer alone until the Rector's voice fell on her ear.

"Miss Green."

"How you startled me!"

"I am very sorry."

"The children are making hay in the five-acre field," determined to ascribe his visit to them.

"I do not want the children, naughty little things!"

"They are not naughty,"

"Well, they never have the sense to see when they are not wanted."

"Do you mean they inflict themselves on you?" asked Lillian, a little nettled; "but you know you always seek them out."

"I am very fond of them; but I get a little irate when they never let me have a word with you. This is an opportunity I have long been seeking. Miss Green, I want to speak to you very seriously, if you will listen to me."

"Please don't," said Lillian, with a strange light in her blue eyes. "I don't want to be serious to-night. Everything is so bright and beautiful, I feel too happy to think of sad things."

"But things need not be sad because they are serious," he said, gently. "Believe me, Miss Green, sorrow shall never touch you if I can help it. I have come to-night to tell you that, and also that the dearest wish of my life is to persuade you to trust yours to my keeping, dear," and he bent over her eagerly. "Do you think you could ever learn to love me?"

Her blue eyes never sank beneath his scrutiny. He had not the power to bring lovelight to their depths or blushes to her cheeks. She answered him without a moment's hesitation, gently but firmly, and, oh, so sadly!—

"Why have you said this? Oh, why couldn't you tell things as they were! I was so happy, and you were my friend!"

"I will be your friend while I live; but, oh, my darling, friendship is not enough to satisfy the cravings of my heart! Dear, I love you so well that my life can never be quite perfect again without you! Won't you give me a word of hope?"

"I cannot—oh, I cannot!"

"I will wait so patiently!" he pleaded. "I will never hurry you. You shall take your own time about it if only you will promise me that you will try to love me!"

"I wish I could!"

There was such a deep despair in her voice, such a yearning cry in its pathos, that the generous man forgot his own trouble to think of hers.

"What is it?" he asked, and he touched her black dress. "Do you mean that your loss is still too fresh for you to think of other ties? Do you mean you wear this for one who filled the place I covet?"

"I wear it for my father," she answered. "Not mine in point of law, but, oh, the best and dearest father girl ever had! I lost him not yet a year ago."

"But, dear, you will not forget him sooner for accepting a husband's love. I am sure he would like to feel his darling was in stronger protection than her own."

Lillian smiled wearily.

"You speak nobly," she said. "I wish—oh, I wish it could be as you say—but I have no heart to give you. It is not mine to give."

"And you are engaged! What can the man be thinking of to let you lead such a life as this!"

"It is not an unhappy life; but I am not engaged, Mr. Darby. My wedding-day was fixed when my father died, and instead of being an heiress I had to earn my own living."

"You mean that he was coward enough to forsake you," cried the clergyman, passionately. "I should like the handling of him!"

"He did not forsake me—he wanted me to elope with him and be married privately, and I refused."

"But you love him still?"

She shook her head.

"I should never marry him, never—not even if he wished it; and I am not likely to marry anyone. Only you see I have no heart to give you, and so, please forget all you have said!"

It was not the whole truth, but more she dare not tell him. Better he should think her pining for a faithless, worthless lover than that he should guess she had given away her whole heart to a man who had no thought of loving her.

The Rector looked troubled, he paced up and down the narrow pathway with eager, restless steps; at last he stopped in front of her.

"That need be no obstacle."

"Mr. Darby, it must be!"

"No!" he said, gravely. "I know by instinct

you are too pure and true to break your word. Promise me you will try to banish this unhappy feeling from your heart, and let me make you my much-loved wife, and do all that in me lies to make you happy!"

She shook her head,
"Don't you trust me!"
"Entirely!"

"Then, believe me, I would never reproach you for your want of affection. I would never mention the past to you; I love you so intensely that I believe firmly I should at last win some return, but even if I fall the fault would be mine, no shadow of blame could rest on you."

"Don't!" she said, faintly; "don't tempt me!"

"It is a temptation then!"

"Do you think it can fall to be when one stands friendless and alone in the world? The offer of a home and someone to love one is a very great temptation."

"Lillian!"

She started.
"Forgive me, I learned the name from the children. Lillian, suffer me to ask you one question. This love which steals your heart against me—I ask not if it is past or present—but this one thing I demand! Is it hopeless? Do you believe that any years of waiting will bring you nearer the one you love?"

"It is hopeless," she returned, promptly; "no years of waiting can alter it. I do not send you away because I have one shadow of belief that aught can bring me nearer my dream."

"Then, Lillian, you must not send me away. I don't ask you to have pity on me, my shadowed life and blighted hopes. I don't think much of winning a woman through her compassion; but Lillian, my love, my darling, I urge you to have pity on yourself!"

"Upon myself! What can you mean?"

"I mean, dear, that this life is not suited for you—that you are not formed to go from girlhood to womanhood, from youth to middle-age alone; and I mean, still more, that you are so friendless, so helpless, it seems to me that you cannot fight your own battles."

No need to say how gladly he would fight them; it was written in his kindling eyes.

"I am very happy here," she said, simply.

"Lady Dacres is never unkind to me."

"But when she comes home this month and the Castle is filled with guests, do you think she will like it when she sees that the only rival to her beauty is her own governess? Do you not think your very grace and sweetness will tell against you?"

"I cannot think Lady Dacres as cruel as that."

"She is as cruel as the grave."

"Has she ever been cruel to you?"

"Never! To me she is the most gracious of hostesses; she little guesses that I know her story, and that the man whose life she blighted was my dearest friend."

"Ought you to tell me this?"

"I think I ought; you are at Lady Dacres' mercy, and I want you to know her true character. You will understand then that, loving you as I do, I cannot bear to think of you as liable to suffer through her caprices."

"Well!"

"You know that she was married last year—May, I think; that she was then a penniless beauty of eighteen, and Sir John Dacres was turned fifty."

"I have heard so; she told me herself."

"Did she? I don't suppose she told you that before she met Sir John who was engaged to one of the noblest men who ever walked this earth—that until within a week of the day fixed for her wedding with him she kept up the deception; and then, just as he was expecting her back to spend the last days before their marriage at the home he shared with his sister, the news came that a special licence had made her Lady Dacres."

Lillian's face had grown white, an awful fear had come to her.

"Are you sure?"

"I am perfectly sure. Ainslie and I had been chums at college. I dare say his cousin had heard of me often enough under the name of Grant,

which I bore until I came into my uncle's property. I was to have performed the wedding. Do you think I can be mistaken, Lillian, when I have the memory of my friend's face before me now on that bright spring morning when he came to tell me all his hopes were vain."

"How could she! Oh! how could she!"

"Ah, child!" said Archibald, tenderly; "girls as pure as you can't understand the temptations of rank and wealth. She sold herself for Sir John's money. And now I ask you, Lillian, is such a woman likely to be a kindly friend to you? The moment you cross her wishes, however innocently, she will turn upon you with the cruelty of a serpent!"

"I must be careful not to cross them, then."

"And you prefer to stay here and take the risks! You like better to remain with such a woman as Lady Dacres than to become my wife?"

"Put it more truly," said Lillian, sadly. "I may be weak and erring, but I have just generosity enough not to take everything at your hands and give you nothing; for the rest I see very little of Lady Dacres, and the children are pleasant companions enough, and sadly neglected."

"You have disappointed me bitterly," he said, taking her hand in his; "and yet I love you the more for your truth and honour. You show me that there exists a noble, generous woman in the world, though I cannot win her."

"There exist many far nobler and far more generous. I hope you will win one of them."

He shook his head.

"I am not one to change!" Then in a lower key, "You will not refuse me your friendship, Lillian!"

"Oh no! I will gladly be your friend!"

"Remember!" he assured her, "I can have no greater pleasure than to think and act for you. If ever you need a friend's advice or counsel—if ever you need a service you could have asked of a brother—ask it of me, and I will gladly do it. No time, no distance will change me; wherever you are, whatever happens, you will find me the same, ready and willing to aid you, longing still that a day may dawn when you will accept my faithful love!"

And then bending down he stooped and pressed his lips passionately to her broad, white forehead. It was his only adieu; another moment and Lillian was alone.

(To be continued.)

AN UNNATURAL FATHER

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(Continued from page 33.)

"My dear Miss Carr," he said, suavely, "I wish you to be the first to congratulate this young lady upon her safe return. We must all of us be glad that the mystery surrounding her birth has been satisfactorily explained away."

By a great effort she controlled herself sufficiently to offer her hand and murmur some inarticulate words of gratulation, and when all were seated at table she said, with her sweetest smile,—

"My dear Mavourneen, how changed you are! I should hardly have recognised you—you used to be so very pretty!"

The lovely, delicate face flushed, but the girl made no response to this salley; only Carrie said with considerable acumen, "Used to be! Gracious powers, where are your eyes, Ju?" and, to the latter's angry surprise, Sir Blount burst into noisy laughter.

That night the gentlemen did not linger over their wine; Quentin and Outram joined the ladies immediately, and Sir Blount went to the study to fetch some papers, which he said were to prove Mavourneen's claim to her name.

He was not absent long. In a very little while he joined his guests, and calling them round him displayed the certificate of the marriage solemnised between Ellen Orand and Claude Verity;

the ceremony was performed at St. Patrick's, Dublin.

"So you see, my dear," he said, addressing the girl, "you have no cause to blush for your mother."

Judith broke in, forgetful of all but her thwarted revenge.

"And pray, Sir Blount, how was this certificate obtained? Forged documents are not unheard-of things."

"My dear lady, it has been in my possession for many years, and had I chosen I could have explained all this mystery long ago; but I had my own objects in view."

"Then all I can say," cried Carrie, "is that you are a detestable old man, and have behaved shamefully to us all round. Ah! yes, it affords you amusement, no doubt, but I wish I might punish you as you deserve!"

He laughed outright at her behaviour, and glanced approvingly at her.

"Bravo, you're a good girl, and aren't afraid to speak the truth. Now, Kathleen, what do I deserve?"

"My gratitude, Sir Blount, although if you have been long in the secret, you should have cleared my mother's name."

"That would not have suited my purpose," grimly. "Miss Judith, you are delighted at the turn of events. I know your good heart."

She knew he was mocking her, and was furious.

"I should like to know who and what Claude Verity was," she said, quivering with rage and disappointment.

"Claude Verity was, and is, a gentleman. Allow me to introduce you to him under his proper name—Sir Blount Pembroke."

If a thunderbolt had fallen in their midst they could not have been more astonished; on Judith's face anger and incredulity struggled for mastery, but in Mavourneen's eyes there was a look Sir Blount could not understand.

"Come here," he said, laughing heartily at the confusion he had made; "have you nothing to say to your father?"

She shrank back still further from him.

"My father!" she said in a strange voice, "and you left my mother to die of a broken heart! I wish I had never known you!"

"Softly, softly, young woman; you used to preach prettily about the duty you owed your unnatural parent. Was it all preaching?"

"No, sir," with a sudden change of manner. "I will try to behave to you as my mother would wish; but, indeed, I do not understand how Claude Verity and Blount Pembroke can be one."

"Nor I," broke in Mrs. Carr; "and if you are jesting, Sir Blount, it is a very sorry jest."

"My dear madam, your indignation but increases your loveliness," with a deep bow, "and does credit to your heart; and as you were poor Ellen's friend, I will explain this thing briefly:—When first I met her I was only Blount Pembroke, and could not afford to offend my father by making an imprudent match; but like a blind young fool I fancied she was essential to my happiness, and married her."

"We met by accident, and it was a mere freak of mine to pass myself off as Claude Verity. She knew that I held a higher position than I appeared to do, and guessed that I was living under a feigned name. But she asked no questions; and when she became my wife I forbade her to mention her suspicions to any creature, threatened to leave her if she communicated with her friends, or held any intercourse with them."

"She was a meek creature, and obeyed me implicitly, and for a little while all went well; but her very sweetness of disposition cloyed me, and at last, in my weariness I left her, with an annuity sufficient for her wants in such an out-of-the-way place as Arrabdown."

"She never discovered where I had gone or who I really was, and as the time went by I half forgot her. I was unfit for a domestic life, and enjoyed my recovered freedom to the utmost. I don't suppose I ever cast any thought upon my child, and as I had never seen her since her infancy I had no affection for her."

"I should never have troubled myself to look her up, unless it had been to disappoint my heir. But when she came amongst us, and I saw how pretty she was, and that Outram was willing to marry her, I fully intended acknowledging her, only I did not mean to have my hand forced, and thought I could extract some fun from the affair. And, thanks to Miss Carr, it has been much jollier than I anticipated."

"You did your duty nobly, my dear lady; but another time, when you assert a mutual acquaintance is not what she should be, either by birth or conduct, please produce proofs!" and he seemed positively to revel in the disgust he had roused in their hearts.

Speechless with anger, Judith glowered upon him as though she would have liked to murder him; but Mrs. Carr said sharply,—

"Outram, have you nothing to say to this wicked old man? Why, sir, he killed his wife."

"He has behaved badly, I know, but dear Mrs. Carr, I owe him too much utterly to repudiate him, and Mavourneen would not wish it. And if I have said nothing it is because I was too completely confounded by this sudden disclosure."

The good matron drew her skirts about her. "Come, girls, I will not stay in this man's house another hour. Mr. Derrick, will you go with us? Mavourneen, child, you must forgive Judith for my sake;" and she called out of the room.

As Quentin followed, Sir Blount said, "You're not going, surely? We regard you quite as a friend."

"I call no scoundrel friend," he retorted, and took Carrie by the arm. She paused, dropped a deep curtsy to Sir Blount.

"You're a miserable old sinner, but, upon my word, I can't dislike you. Good-bye, Mephistopheles;" then, as she went out with Quentin, "If you were a year or two older, Quen, I would take compassion on you, since you are such a pretty and nice boy."

So Outram and Mavourneen were married, and the girl honestly strove to do her duty to her unnatural father; and if, when at last he was called away she could not sorrow much, could one wonder?

[THE END]

FOUND WANTING.

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CHAPTER XIX.

For the first time in his life Albert Delmar found himself completely set at defiance—and the discovery did not please him. His father alone had ever held him in anything like strictness; and from that Albert had broken away after quite boyhood. His mother had not been equal to curbing his rebel spirit, and as a consequence he had followed his own will wherever it led him, notwithstanding his real devotion to her and his fits of remorse. At college he had been followed and lauded, and made the fashion; partly for the very reason that he held himself so independently. With Maddie, to whom he would fain have been submissive, it was the same—he found himself always leading, she always following. But Christine's submission had been that of love, not of inferior force; and when love could no longer blind her, she flung off the shackles as he would have done himself. It was impossible not to sympathise with her, but her defiance must stop short of rousing scandalous talk.

As the days went on, and no line or word came from her, that same scandal stared him too closely in the face to be very welcome. Pride and his sense of shame stayed him from making any move to get her to return—he knew neither command nor request would be obeyed. Still, if she remained away, people would inevitably form their own conjectures; probably he would be the principal sufferer, which, of course, mattered little; but Christine could not escape entirely, and the mere thought of impertinent gossip chafed

him. Mrs. Foster increased the difficulty, by asking him a week after Christine's departure, if he knew when her mistress was coming back. The question gave him a disagreeable shock.

"I don't know," he said; "not yet, I think." And then a thought striking him he added: "I shall probably be going away myself next week."

"I hope you will, sir," said the housekeeper, an old servant—indeed the only one who had been in the house before her master's marriage—"for you don't look over bright."

"Oh, only fancy," said he, lightly,—"*there's* never anything the matter with me."

He could not settle to anything—his whole life seemed in suspense; his desk was unopened, his pen lay idle; he had no ideas, and if they had been there, no power to express them. The piano in the drawing-room he looked—why he hardly knew—and a smaller grand in his own study was only fitfully touched.

The house seemed lonely—he missed Christine, though he had been so little with her, and cared not whether she came or went. But it was another life in the house—he heard her piano or her step about the rooms; he knew she was there, or would be coming in from the garden or river.

He had not deemed it possible he could have grown so accustomed to her presence that the knowledge that it had gone (for he had never felt like this in her previous absences), could affect him in the least.

But Christine had one of those rich, intensely sympathetic natures that become an integral part of the lives they mix with. She stamped every room she inhabited, every object she used indelibly—they almost spoke of her. And Delmar found this out.

Of course he could not complain—he had striven for this end; he had been more than willing to be sufficient to himself—but nevertheless, when the time came for testing the proud self-reliance, it rather ignominiously failed him.

It was not a pleasant or an easy thing to stand, not yet thirty, in the very glory and pride of manhood, alienated from all the sweetness that may be gathered from life—for he was the last man to bear desolation—the fumes and exuberance of his own nature required companionship, and something to love.

His own thoughts were the only companions he had, for he shut himself away more closely than ever, and what bright spots had they to rest on? A careless, self-willed existence that did not satisfy him, always striving, never conquering, and a restless self-dignity the consequence.

The darling of father and mother, but vexing their hearts, and laying up for himself a thousand regrets to mingle with his grief when they left him. Then a few months of almost perfect happiness, of fresh hopes, fresh and strong resolutions—then the flinging away of all, till he had given a woman the right to call him coward.

He had silenced her, but he could not get the words out of his head. He tried to scorn them, but found himself, instead, wishing they were not true. His pride, his stern resistance to the softness within him, grew more feeble. He strove to bear up, but he was desolate, stricken. His revenge was complete—the man who had taken his darling saw the sister he would have died for an outcast from her own home—an instrument used for ignoble ends.

But as he sat in the silent house, where never a note of music or a laugh echoed, it was not this victory he thought of—not the triumph, and the acclamations, and the gleaming banners—but the dead and the dying, and the tears shed by women. And always Colin kept with him, wistfully asking for the mistress he loved.

"I wonder you will be with me," Delmar would say, bitterly, to the hound; "you would not if you were a human being, my Colin; and I am certain I could not bear you near me if you were. Your eyes cannot look reproach."

He went one night before he left home, into Christine's room—he had never been in them since the night after she had gone. He shuddered as he left them, and went downstairs quicker even than usual. He gave strict orders that all letters were to be forwarded to him in Paris,

where he was going, and, with Colin for a companion, lent Dunswood.

Still no letter—no sign from Christine, and it was now September. Delmar grew angry at her persistent silence—she should not brave him for ever, and toss all consideration for his name to the winds.

He wrote to her from Paris—not without many a battle with pride—briefly and haughtily enough. If, he said, she chose to remain apart from him, there must be some definite arrangement come to that the world could understand. He would await her answer, and addressed her at her brother's house.

He waited in an impatience that had not been subdued since the days at Strathairie; but time passed, and still no answer. What did it mean? It was unlike Christine, unless his letter were too authoritative. Was she ill? Perhaps that thought, almost fear, dictated gentler terms in a second letter he wrote from Dover—he could not go home till something was settled that he could give out.

She could not take offence at this letter, and at this time—October—probably the Cliffords and she were both in town. He did not omit to consider the possibility of his letters being suppressed. He divined that for every reason Clifford would dislike Christine's return, and to influence her against her own conviction would be impossible.

A week he stayed at the Lord Warden, and then started for London. He meant to assert his rights now—he would be defied no longer; and Clifford, or anyone else who stood in his way, would be swept down. From his wife's own lips he would hear her answer—no one should come between them.

One morning—a sunny morning in October—Mrs. Elmhurst's parlour-maid opened the door to a visitor, who asked if her mistress was at home, and handed her a dainty card, whereas he was shown into a rather showy-looking drawing-room, the details of which he scarcely noticed.

He did not sit down in the chair placed for him, but remained standing, curbing, with an effort, his restless inclination to move about. Happily, for his powers of patience, he was not kept long waiting. Mrs. Elmhurst entered, visibly embarrassed, very surprised, and not at all pleased. Neither of those two offered the salutation that had been a matter of course, when the young man came and went as he liked about the white house. He only bowed—she the same.

"I will not pretend, Mrs. Elmhurst," said Delmar, drawing forward a chair for her, "to be oblivious that my presence here is unwelcome to you. I do not propose to inflict you with it long."

Mrs. Elmhurst opened her lips to say "she was a little surprised, naturally;" but substituted a deprecatory smile; she was too conscious of her own wrong towards her visitor to be at her ease; she began to fear him a little.

"Your niece is in town, I suppose?" resumed Delmar, questioningly.

"Maddie! yes, she is in town." She looked at him apprehensively.

"I should like to see her," was the next coolly uttered phrase.

"See Maddie, Mr. Delmar?" said the lady, in rather indignant astonishment. "May I ask the reason for such an extraordinary request?"

"I see nothing extraordinary in it. As my wife is her sister-in-law, I may be considered a sort of connection. I believe it is not unusual for people placed as we are to see each other sometimes."

"Yes, but—really, you oblige me to speak plainly. You must feel that after what has passed you and Maddie should not meet."

"Oh," said Delmar, carelessly, "I should hope both she and I had cultivated that folly. With your permission I will see her here, and to that I imagine even her husband cannot object."

"I must decline that permission," said Mrs. Elmhurst, stiffly, as she rose. "I cannot lend my aid to such an interview."

His manner, his face, changed then.

"I have a right to demand it," he said, sternly, "and you will grant it. Do you suppose

I am ignorant of the part you played in Maddie's marriage! Choose between my seeing her under your roof—but not in your presence—or under her own. No matter to you what I intend doing or saying—nor do I expect you to trust me. It is simply that I see her—here or there is for you to choose."

"But, Mr. Delmar, Albert—think—what will her husband say!—the position in which you place her!"

"Will you send for her, Mrs. Elmhurst, or shall I go? You know of old I am not patient!"

She hesitated—he stood before her, resolute, impossible to move.

"If you will see her," she said, at last, "it is better for her to come here. I will send for her. Will you wait here?"

"If I may."

The courtesy sounded almost like a mockery, but now he was master he could afford a verbal submission.

She bowed and went out of the room, and Delmar was left alone to wait the entrance of Pelham Clifford's wife.

Ever since at Dover this resolve had been taken; it had filled his every thought; but now that each step might be here, each touch on the handle here, his heart died within him. He shrank like a child from an ordeal too hard for him—longing to stay, longing to go.

Oh, how the minutes tolled—would this time never pass! Then a step without—light, slow, a hand on the door—and all his passionate tremor grew still; the throbbing pulse was passive, the changing breath quiet.

Then Maddie was before him, looking up into his face.

CHAPTER XX.

Nor as she had looked in the sunny days that might have been years ago, and yet to the dizzy sense of the man who had lost her were now—ave for that look in her eyes. What was it?—was she afraid of him who loved her?

He stood looking at her, without the power to move, to speak, who had thought he could be so strong. She was questioning him mutely, he knew, and he could not answer; waiting now as ever, to follow as he led, to give him her hand if he gave his; but he made no sign, and could not, for his pulse still throbbled at sight of the face that had held for him such glad welcome—throbbled as of old—and he had no right.

"Lina—Maddie!" he said, brokenly, covering his eyes.

Her heart beat faster, a startled look swept into her face. She suffered so little as he did; she had no deathless associations; she had no feeling as he had that it were better to have no greeting at all than to touch a hand that would lie cold in his; but at his words her triumph sank, some glamour of the past came over her, some sense of the ruin she had wrought with so careless a hand. His old dominance was asserting itself; she would like him to forgive her, to allow she had been tempted; but she was half afraid too, and shrank back.

"Albert!" she faltered.

He recovered himself with a start, dropping his hand, and biting his lip in vexation.

"I forgot; I ought to ask forgiveness for recalling stupid old memories," he said, with a slight laugh. "It was not for that I took this step of asking you to wait on me; for that, too, I must apologise."

"It doesn't matter," said Maddie, hurriedly, "we—we are not like strangers."

"No, of course not; you are very kind to excuse me. Will you sit down?"

He was master of the situation; it was Maddie who was helpless and unnerved, following blindly all she was told. She dropped into the chair he placed, glad that her other glove occupied her attention. She had not a word to say.

"I want Christine's address, that is all," said Delmar, quietly, "and of course you know it."

Silence so dead, so expressive that he lifted the eyes he had bent down. Maddie, meeting that gaze, flushed scarlet.

"Was—was that why you sent for me?" she said, confusedly. "I had better go; it's no use."

"Pardon me; I must ask you to grant me a moment more. It is but a small thing I ask you, and I have some right to an answer. I have written twice to Christine to your house, and received no answer."

"I haven't seen any letters," exclaimed Maddie.

"No doubt; still they have miscarried in some way, and I am not inclined to run further risk."

"But—but perhaps she did not mean to answer."

"She would certainly have answered one. But I am keeping you, and my time is precious."

Maddie glanced up at him irresolutely. She had never seen him look more uncompromisingly resolute, and her heart sank in fear. How should she keep the secret she had passed her word to Pelham to guard! Then the thought flashed to her mind.

"But, after all, he is a man and I am a woman, and he loves me still."

She stood up, looking so pretty and young.

"I don't want to interfere," she began, "between you and dear Christine—" she did not see how his lip curled at the "dear"—"but most likely your letters have reached her, and if she has not answered them—"

"Forgive me for reminding you you are wide of the point. I did not ask for a discussion of my position or my wife's, but for the name of the street where she lives, and the number of the house," said Delmar, distinctly.

Then she tried her arts.

"But if the answer would get me into trouble!" she said, with a soft, insinuating upward glance of the brown eyes.

"May I ask," he said, with unchanged coldness, "why you make such an appeal?"

"Ah!" said Maddie, and she was not entirely acting, "how implacable you are!"

"Implacable!" he repeated, in a low voice; "perhaps I am—to you."

"Oh! you must not!" cried Maddie; "you must have some mercy—you must spare me his anger. I promised him, and I dare not tell you!"

With a sudden flash in his dark eyes, Delmar made a step towards the door.

"Then he can—and shall," he said, setting his teeth.

The girl flung herself in his way, catching his hand.

"Oh! no—no!" she cried, frantically, "you must not go to him—you must not meet—it is my one dread! Oh, Albert! you loved me once—you would do anything I asked once. Only this one thing I want of you."

"And I one thing of you, and if you will not give it I will have it from him. Will you yield, Maddie?"

He bent down to her, laying his other hand on hers to unclasp the fingers that clung to him. Could he feel that touch and still be unshaken!—see her terror and not remember that once he would have given life itself to save her one pang! Did he love her so much less! Maddie penetrated one thought of his.

"It is not him only," she said, breathlessly, "I am afraid for—it is both of you. Will you never forgive him—me! I did not know—and I loved him!"

"Did not know what! That a promise is a promise!"

"No—no—I did not think you would care very much—and he said it was best, and perhaps it was; but I want you to say we can be friends again," sobbed Maddie.

"You thought I should not care! Then did you think all my vows were false—like yours! Heaven knows I was true then, as I have never been since—as I never can be again! Speak the truth; and say you cared nothing—that you loved me when I was near, and forgot me when I had gone. Say you listened too readily to friends who told you I was not worthy of you! Say devotion was the breath of life to you, and one lover did as well as another so he were present! Say you had no noble compunctions be-

cause you were so utterly trusted—that it was no hard thing to listen to new vows before the echoes of the old ones had died out—don't say, if you are not the incarnation of falseness, that you did not know!"

He had spoken with passionate force, but as Maddie, loosening her tight hold, sank into a chair, his tone changed to bitter contempt.

"And yet, perhaps, women like you never do know! They take a man's soul and say it is priceless, and then blast it with a cruel word. Just a few tears, and a new lover dries them. Don't cry, Maddie; is a man's heart worth it?"

Those tears he scorned had had power to make him as soft as his own mother.

What was it that through all this interview had been growing on him with each word, each look of hers! What aching sense like a child's, who has believed in its mother's perfect beauty as a creed, and finds out that others are more fair! What still more miserable sense of something wasted and lost, of an idol that had never been gold, though it had glittered with incomparable brightness!

"He tempted me," said Maddie, still sobbing less from the depths of her heart than from a readily touched sentiment.

"And you were so willing to be tempted! You thought no gentler words were needed than those you wrote to me. You kill all but the bare physical life—and that you make worthless—and tell me it is all for the best! You might as well break a man slowly on the wheel, kill him or madden him by drops of water that take years to do their work, and say you are giving him matchless health. And yet it is women like you that we men are—fools that we are—all eager to worship!"

"But you will forgive!" said Maddie, drying her tears. "I may have been sorry, and you allow no excuse." Through all her distress—real, though evanescent—these lifted itself the curse of her shallow nature—he had hardly given way to such bitter upbraiding if all the old love was dead. Maddie was pure-minded, and she loved her husband, but she was coquette to the core; and what woman like her has that crystal purity that would deem itself sullied by such triumph!

"I don't profess saintliness," said Delmar, abruptly; "when I am injured I revenge it—if I can. I don't understand forgiving it. And I suppose you can be happy enough without it, so why waste words?"

"I was so sure," said Maddie, still tearfully; "that you had forgotten it all when you married—and then—"

"Let it pass," said Delmar, hastily and sternly; "you have no right to speak of it—that is Christine's place. We have both stupidly wasted time. I had never meant to see you again, and this will be the last time."

"Then go! Don't ask me again about Christine," she said, springing up, angry with him, as her eyes and colour showed. "I will not tell you. I can be implacable too."

"And hold to a promise through fear—not faith," said Delmar, looking at her so keenly and mockingly that she could not stand the scrutiny, and turned away. "I don't think I envy Pelham Clifford."

With only a slight bow he went out, with as light and stately a step as if a woman's terror had not more than half baffled him. He would have walked so if a shameful death had lain before him. And perhaps, proud as he was, he might have chosen that instead of this too perfect knowledge of the woman who had been to him the ideal of all goodness, and this haunting, wretched feeling of being an outcast amongst the crowd around him.

CHAPTER XXI.

MADDIE CLIFFORD was angry, very angry, as she stood in her aunt's drawing-room after Delmar had left. He owned no empire over him, he had reproached her in no measured terms—her one triumph was that he had failed to obtain the information he wished. Her triumph was short lived, however—terror

succeeded rapidly enough. She knew her husband was not at home—he was with a friend not very far from Knights Millwood, for a few days shooting; and if Delmar questioned her servants it was possible he might learn his fact. The mere thought was enough to drive Maddie from the house without waiting to see her aunt; and she almost ran home.

"Has anyone called?" she asked of the footman, trying to speak carelessly.

"Mrs. Lonsdale left her card, madam," was the reply. "I have seen no one else."

Maddie felt ready to faint with the sudden relief, and went into the dining-room, throwing herself into a chair, starting up again as she heard Christine's voice in the hall. The next moment she came in.

"Oh, Christine!" cried Maddie.

"What is the matter?" the other asked, stopping short. "Has anything happened?"

"I am so frightened, what can I do if they meet—"

"Who? What do you mean? For Heaven's sake, Maddie, do act like a reasonable being," said Christine, with unworded impatience.

"Who are you speaking of?"

"Albert has been"—began Maddie.

"Albert—here!" repeated Christine, recoiling.

No, at aunt's; he sent for me, and it was to find out where you were," Maddie said, pouring out her words in a rapid way, while Christine stood still, leaning her hand heavily on a chair near her; "and I would not tell him. Then he said he would find out from Pelham, and he had written here to you, and you had not answered."

"He had written to me? I have had no letters," said Christine. "Well, what then?"

Maddie coloured up, and looked confused.

"Oh, never mind," said she, "the rest. I mean, he went away—and Pelham is so near Daneswood—and Albert is so fiery he would not care what he did."

"But he did not know where Pelham was, or did he ask here?"

"No!"

"Was he going—" home was on her lips—she changed the word, and said "to Daneswood?"

"I don't know!"

"Then his meeting Pelham is the purest chance, and you are needlessly frightened, Maddie. But those letters—how came I not to have them? When were they sent?"

"He didn't say, but it doesn't matter; you would not have answered them."

"Certainly I should. I can't understand it—perhaps Pelham—no, how should he know?"

She moved away—the mere thought that Delmar had been so near her, the mere sound of his name had stirred her, and Maddie had seen him—Maddie, whom he loved. It was so bitter a moment. She wanted to know how he looked, spoke—if he seemed well—but she could not ask Maddie, who held her place. Why had he written to her—why want to see her? She grew so restless, she felt she must be alone, but first she stopped before her sister.

"Maddie, what did he say to make you think he would seek Pelham?"

"He said he had a right to know, and if I would not tell him Pelham should."

"I think," said Christine, after a minute's musing, "he only wanted to force your hand. He would not find out in that way. I wish I knew if he had gone to Daneswood."

"Why! Should you write to him?"

"Yes!"

"Dear me, what an idea!"

"Perhaps it seems so to you," said Christine, with the nearest approach to scorn she had ever permitted herself to show to Maddie; she was not a saint, and she was so wounded and sore.

"There," said Maddie, her temper, still ruffled, rising again, "you are putting on your haughty air. I'm sure I have had enough of that."

"Maddie, do you know what you are saying?"

"Yes, very well. I wish Pelham were here," said Maddie, beginning to sob hysterically;

"no one else cares what I suffer! Albert was cruel."

"Cruel!" said Christine, impatiently; "and

you accuse him! You suffer! What have you not made others suffer! Oh, I must speak some time—I cannot break my heart in utter silence! How much do you care that you have ruined his life and mine! What claim have you on sympathy! How much of it do you give? I suppose he told you at last what you have done, and you who love the soft places could not bear to hear it, and so you call him cruel. But all this misery began with you."

She had Delmar's habit of moving from place to place under strong emotion. The passionate forces of her nature, not lightly roused, found at such times a relief that was imperative. She only seemed calm because she had so much self-control.

Maddie managed to get rid of her tears—to try and think of something to fling back at Christine, but either her wits were not ready or she was afraid.

The fragile girl, with her pale face and pathetic eyes, somehow did not look as if she would be easily assailed. Christine took up her hat to go, and Maddie, forgetting her insulted dignity, cried out,—

"Oh, you are not going! I have been so upset—I am so nervous and frightened. Suppose something happens and I am quite alone!"

Christine hesitated. To be alone would be such a luxury, but for Pelham's sake—

"What can happen?" she said.

"I don't know. Don't go. I won't say a word about Albert—only don't go."

A strange fear began to creep into even the brave heart of Delmar's wife. Was it possible the weaker nature had power over her here! What could happen! her reason asked her, and answered "nothing."

Pelham was staying some miles away from Knights Millwood; it was most unlikely he would go near the place; Albert had not meant to go to him. He dreaded his own temper when he got beyond his control, and would shun meeting him, as he always had. What, then, was there to fear! Again, nothing, and because there was nothing she feared everything. Chances were shaky things—they often went exactly contrary to what one expected.

Maddie fully believed herself the greatest sufferer that long afternoon; but even had she been so she had the advantage of being able to find comfort in Christine's presence. Christine had no such advantage. Maddie was, as it were, an aggravation to the dread that grew upon her unbearably. Maddie had but one phase of feeling—Christine a thousand, and on not one of them could she open her lips.

The two girls occupied themselves in their usual way. Maddie was much restored in spirits by the appearance of some callers, and when she returned to Christine, who had excused herself, she was quite lively, and laughed at her own foolishness.

"Well, Maddie," Christine said, "since you are so much better I think I had better go."

"Oh, no—stop and have some tea first; it will be up directly. Besides, I want to have a laugh with you when the day is over."

"The day is over!" repeated Christine. "I wonder how it will end. Don't say that, Maddie."

"My dear child, are you superstitious—you so strong-minded! I thought you had no nerves. By-the-bye, I was right not to tell Albert where you were, wasn't I?"

The strong-minded girl with no nerve started and flushed at the name Maddie uttered, and Maddie noticed it with rather unconcealed surprise. She was longing to chatter, however, and could not stay her tongue.

"I had no idea he was in England—you know young Fitzmaurice told us he heard he was abroad. I wonder if he has left London. Did you think he was in England?"

"No."

The abrupt answer might have warned Maddie.

"I don't think he ought to have wanted me to break my promise to Pel," she rattled on; "and he—"

"For Heaven's sake, don't talk about him!"

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said Christine, almost fiercely, rising suddenly from her chair.

She went to the other end of the room, battling with herself, hating the weakness that had given way before Maudie.

The sounds that came from the hall at this moment, however, helped her more than her own efforts.

Fanny's voice asking for her mistress—where was she! then her step running upstairs.

Christine sprang to the door and opened it.

"Fanny!" she gasped.

The maid looked surprised. She had only brought a telegram just arrived—an every-day thing, probably of little importance, and she could not understand her mistress looking as if she had come with a sentence of death.

"Only a telegram, ma'am," said she, reassuringly.

Christine took the yellow envelope with unsteady fingers. Only a telegram—only life or death!

(To be continued.)

FACETIE.

WILLIE: "Does your mother give you anything if you take your medicine without crying?"
BILLY: "No; but she gives me something if I don't."

"DOCTOR, when do you think a man weighs the most?" asked a patient who was undergoing a course of dietary treatment. "When he steps on my corns," answered the doctor.

MABEL: "I wonder how did Clara induce him to propose?" Minnie: "She told him she was ambitious to win a name for herself and common politeness made him offer his."

PAPA, it speaks here of a burst of confidence. What does it mean?" "Failure of a trusted bank," growled the old gentleman, who had just been hit by that sort of calamity.

MRS. BINGO: "I wish you would tell that servant-girl that we don't require her any more. Bingo: "Certainly, my dear." (Later to servant): "Bridget, Mrs. Bingo wants to see you."

"I THINK it's absurd to say kissing is dangerous," gushed Mrs. Lilytop. "What possible disease could be spread by the simple act?" "Marriage, madam," grunted Grumpy.

"OLD man, I am sorry to hear that you and your wife have separated; did anyone come between you?" "Yes; her father and mother, three maiden aunts and a grandmother."

WIFE: "What would you do if you had no wife to look after your mending, I'd like to know!" Husband: "Do! Why, in that case I could afford to buy new clothes."

CYNICUS: "I heard of a man to-day who buried a wife and child in the afternoon, and went to the theatre at night." Maude: "He was a brute." Cynicus: "No, undertaker."

JUDGE: "You were alone when you committed the robbery?" Delinquent: "Yes, your worship. You see, when you have got a mate, you never know whether he's honest or not."

"MABEL, I don't want you to tie any more strings on my finger." "Why, John?" "I wasted two whole hours this morning wondering what it was you wanted me to remember."

A LADY recently asked her servant how the mustard-pot had become cracked. The reply, made with all gravity, was that she did not know, but supposed it was owing to the mustard being so strong.

"POOR CHOLLIE!" said the girl who was in a sympathetic mood. "He can't say 'no.'" "He might shake his head, then," said the practical girl. "No, poor fellow; his collar is too high for that."

"You youngscoundrel," said the father, seizing his disobedient son by the hair; "I'll show you how to treat your mother." And he gave him several bangs on the ears, and then shook him until his hair began to fall out.

BOBBY: "What are descendants, father?"
Father: "Why the people who come after you."
(Presently): "Who is that young man in the passage?" Bobby: "That's one of sister's descendants come to take her for a drive."

SHE: "When you go to ask papa, the first thing he will do will be to accuse you of seeking my hand merely to become his son-in-law." He: "Yes! And then—" She: "And then you must agree with him. He's a lot prouder of himself than he is of me."

HE (wondering if that Williams has ever been accepted): "Are both your rings heirlooms?" She (concealing the hand): "Oh dear yes! One has been in the family since the time of Alfred; but the other is newer, and (blushing) only dates from the Conquest."

LITTLE DOT: "Mamma, I was playing with your best tea set while you were away, and when you bring it out for company you'll be shocked, 'cause you'll think one of the cups has a hair in it, but it isn't a hair." Mamma: "What is it?" Little Dot: "It's only a crack."

"My fortune is made!" he cried. "I will be rich beyond the wildest dreams of avarice. I shall start for Klondike to-morrow. My chemistry will be my salvation." "How so?" said his friend. "Have you discovered a compound that will aid in the detection of gold deposits?" "No; I have invented a yeast that will make six loaves of bread from the flour ordinarily required for one."

"THEY say," ventured the young man, "that it is becoming quite the thing for newly married couples to go and see Niagara Falls in Winter." "It must be a beautiful sight in Winter," she said. "I should so like to see it!" His next trembling utterance settled it, and they are to start next week.

A COMFORTABLE, sleek, old-fashioned parish clerk sat on a gravestone. "What do you think of the Church crisis?" asked the friendly passer-by. "Eh?" "The Church crisis?" repeated the passer-by. "Oh, nothin' much. I used to be t' parish clerk. Then the new pa'son ca'd me a sextant; then he went, an' another coom and ca'd me a virgin; an' t' last un ca's me a sacrilege."

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SOCIETY.

THE May Drawing-rooms are to be held, the first on the 10th, the second on the 16th, and another at a later date not yet fixed.

THE Duke and Duchess of York will arrive at St. James's Palace for the season on the morning of Sunday, April 23rd.

THE richest princess in the world is the Crown Princess Louise Josephine, of Sweden and Norway, married to the Crown Prince of Denmark.

PRINCESS BEATRICE will return to England with the Queen, and at Walsingham she goes to Germany for five or six weeks instead of accompanying her Majesty to Balmoral.

THE Prince of Wales will himself hold the third and fourth levees of the season after his return from the Continent. These functions will take place, one about the end of April, the other early in May.

QUEEN VICTORIA has been faithful to black ever since her widowhood, her toilets are nevertheless costly, the silks, satins, and velvets employed being of the richest and most expensive qualities; Her Majesty's collection of lace alone, which she is continually augmenting, being worth thousands of pounds.

THE German Empress spends a great deal of money upon her clothes, but many items of her wardrobe are made within the palace. It is said that about a couple of hundred workers are kept in constant employment in connection with her Majesty's costumes, the embroideries alone occupying a hundred hands. It is no unusual thing for the same dress to be returned many times to the workroom for trifling alterations or fresh trimmings.

THE Princess of Wales will not be seen much in Society this season. Neither will Princess Victoria of Wales nor Princess Charles be in London, and it is extremely doubtful whether the Duchess of York will be much seen, so that, so far as Royalty is concerned, it certainly does not seem as if we were likely to have a very brilliant season.

THE German Emperor has been playing tennis frequently during the past few weeks, as he finds the exercise very beneficial to his health. His Majesty generally spends an hour or two on most afternoons at the tennis courts, that he has lately had made at the castle of Ballenreuth. The Empress shares her husband's pleasures in tennis, and Her Majesty often joins him in a game.

THERE are great rejoicings in the Danish Royal family over the birth of the little son of Prince Christian, elder brother of Prince Charles of Denmark. This little man occupies the same position in Denmark that our baby Prince Edward of York fills in England; that is to say, he is the great-grandson of the reigning monarch; and will one day be King himself, if he lives. Prince Edward of York is, of course, second cousin to the new-comer.

A STRANGE institution, but one that works admirably, was organised by the Queen and Prince Albert early in their married life at Windsor Castle. It is known as the Committee of the Queen's Household, and is composed of the higher officers who serve in the Royal establishment. All domestic differences and back-stair bickerings are laid before this little court. Its members go to the root of every quarrel and complaint, and give judgment upon them. Very serious cases are laid, with the decision of the committee, before the Queen herself.

THE Queen will probably return to Windsor Castle from the Continent on Friday, April 23rd, or Saturday, the 29th. Her Majesty will spend the greater part of the second week in May at Buckingham Palace, and there is to be a Drawing Room during her stay in town (on Wednesday the 10th), at which Her Majesty will receive the Corps Diplomatique. The Queen will go to Balmoral a day or two before Whitsuntide (probably on Friday, May 19th), and Her Majesty is to stay in Scotland until after Ascot race-week, returning to Windsor on Tuesday, June 20th.

STATISTICS.

THERE are 12,000 cabs and 2,500 omnibuses in London.

THE various countries of the world now use 18,400 different kinds of postage stamps.

THERE are more persons over 60 years of age in France than in any other country in Europe. Ireland comes next.

IT is calculated that in ordinary everyday travelling the people of England spend about £150,000 a day.

THERE are in the United States over fifty distinct secret orders, with more than 70,000 lodges and 5,000,000 members.

GEMS.

THERE is nothing more terrible than energetic ignorance.

THE charities that soothe and heal and bless lie scattered at the feet of men like flowers.

GOOD-NATURE, like the bee, collects sweetness from every herb. Ill-nature, like the spider, sucks poison from honeyed flowers.

HAPPINESS is like manna; it is gathered in grains, and enjoyed every day. It will not keep; it cannot be accumulated; nor have we to go out of ourselves or into remote places to gather it, since it is rained down from heaven at our very doors, or rather within them.

HE who thinks better of his neighbours than they deserve cannot really be a bad man; for the standard by which his judgment is usually formed is the goodness of his own heart. It is the base only who believe all men base, or, in other words, creatures like themselves.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

CONSUMMÉ.—Two chickens, soaked in cold water and put into a soup kettle, with one small onion with two cloves stuck in it, one bay leaf, one head of celery or a pinch of celery seeds, one sprig of parsley, one piece of mace, one sprig of thyme, one large or two small carrots, two turnips, three quarts of cold water, two tablespoonfuls of butter, and salt to taste. Let boil three or four hours, or until tender. Skim off the fat, strain through a sieve, and put in a cold place to cool. When cold remove the fat, and it will be ready to use. When you haven't chicken, two pounds each of veal and beef may be substituted.

SCHOOL CHEESECAKE.—Ingredients: One teacupful of bread-crumbs, one ounce butter, two ounces raisins, one teacupful of hot milk, one egg, two ounces sugar, two ounces good figs, and one orange. Cut the figs up very small, stone and halve the raisins, and add both to the crumbs sugar and butter in a bowl; pour in the milk, stir all together, and leave it to cool. Grate the peel of the orange and strain the juice, and then beat the egg into the above mixture, and add the orange-peel and juice. Bake in a moderate oven twenty minutes or more, according to size. This is a very wholesome children's pudding.

LEMON MARMALADE.—Ingredients: Equal weight of fruit and sugar, water. After having weighed the lemons, wash and wipe them then cut them in halves, squeeze out the juice and strain out all pips. Put the peels into a saucepan with plenty of water, and boil till they are quite tender, then drain them out of the water. Scoop out as much of the white pith from the inside of the peel as possible, and cut the yellow rinds into thin shreds. Put the juice of the lemons into a preserving pan with the sugar and boil it to a syrup. Then put in the shredded rinds, and boil until some will "jelly" on a plate, when allowed to get cold. Put into dry jars, and when cold, cover tightly.

MISCELLANEOUS.

A SPIDER can live ten months without food.

EXPERIMENTS to reproduce dead men's features from their skulls are being made in Germany.

IN proportion to their weight, dogs can absorb without danger sixteen times as much arsenic as would kill a human being.

SNUFF-TAKING originated in England from the capture of vast quantities of snuff by Sir George Rooke's expedition to Vigo in 1784.

THE world is now paying more for instruments of destruction and the enginery of death than for churches, school, arts, or letters.

IN the hotels built in China for the use of foreigners, the highest stories are the most expensive because they are the breeziest.

AN eminent astronomer says that for communication with the inhabitants of Mars we should require a flag as large as Ireland with a pole 500 miles long.

THE term of a prisoner in Mexico is divided into three periods. The first is occupied with penal labour, the second is spent in the training school, with small pay, and the third is preparatory to freedom, with paid work and many privileges.

FROZEN oysters are regularly shipped from New Zealand to England. They are opened and then frozen into oblong blocks, 2 in. in width, 6 in. in height and 12 in. in length. The blocks are then neatly wrapped in white paper and packed in tin cases, each case containing eight blocks.

A CURIOUS watch has been brought out in France. The dial is transparent, but there are no works behind it, and the hands appear to move by magic. The secret lies in concealing the works at the edge of the case, and communicating the motion to the hands by means of a glass disc.

THE paintings of the Royal Gallery at Madrid comprise some of the most beautiful in the world. They number over 2,000, and are said to be worth 200,000,000 dollars. Among them are ten by Raphael, forty-six by Murillo, sixty-four by Velasquez, sixty-two by Rubens, and forty-three by Titian.

A PROCESS has been invented by which eyes may be coloured to suit the taste of their owner. This is accomplished by the injection of some liquid into the eye behind the pupil. The experiment has been tried in Paris, and pale-blue eyes were transformed to deep violet orbs in a second, with no apparent injury to the patient.

IN certain parts of the Himalaya Mountains the native women have a singular way of putting their children to sleep in the middle of the day. The child is put near a stream of water, and by means of a palm leaf the water is deflected so as to run over the back of the child's head. The water pouring on the child's head apparently sends it to sleep.

THE communal authorities of Ghent have decided to provide the policemen on night duty with dogs capable of defending them in the event of attack. The experiment is an interesting one, and in the towns where it has been tried it is said to have yielded excellent results. This is not the only police reform which is to be introduced in Belgium. At Schaerbeck, one of the suburbs of Brussels, all the policemen will soon be provided with bicycles, special sheds for which are to be constructed at all the police stations.

IT is generally thought that among the ancient civilised peoples the Romans had the most perfect systems of water supplies. But excavations in Greece have shown that in several respects its inhabitants were more advanced in the art of laying aqueducts than their Italian neighbours. Their water was brought to them in subterranean ducts, so that greater purity was secured, and the liquid was kept cool. The very fact that the Roman aqueducts are more visible, as being over ground, probably accounts for the fact that Roman constructions have enjoyed world-wide fame, while the superior Greek art was unknown in this respect.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

ANXIETY.—The marriage holds good.

PAT.—You can claim for a week's wages.

H. T.—Any of the large London hospitals.

BIRDIE.—The English stamp would suffice.

LULLIPUT.—Cannot claim legal relationship.

J. T.—They have no right to detain your property.

CRAIGITY.—St. Paul's, 404 feet; Monument, 202 feet.

MIDON.—Her Majesty is about four feet ten inches high.

AN OLD READER.—We have no knowledge of the fund.

R. O. P.—Opinions are never given on legal documents.

A. P.—Only entitled after completing long period of service.

TOMMY'S DARLING.—At the headquarters of the regiment.

M. P.—You are responsible for making payments at due dates.

VIC.—Queen Victoria will be eighty years old the 24th of next May.

SAMUEL PASKA.—We cannot furnish the addresses of private individuals.

MOUSTACHIO.—The only final method is to pull out the hairs one by one.

BOB'S MOTHER.—They are generally selected from the fore; no examination.

PLAYGERS.—The Drury Lane Theatre has the largest holding capacity in Great Britain.

ONE IN DIFFICULTY.—Creditors are not under compulsion to accept payment by instalments.

SUPERSTITION.—Have nothing to do with fortune tellers. No human being can tell your destiny.

B. H. A.—You appear to have a good claim. But you had better place all the circumstances before a lawyer.

*** MANDARIN.**—There are said to be about one million temples in China, containing from five to ten million idol gods.

CURRY.—Clothing that is scented with oil of cloves, oil of cedar, or cinnamon, will not be attacked by insects of any kind.

CORA.—Whiting mixed to a paste with sweet oil removes all spots from tin. Polish afterwards with dry whiting and newspapers.

AINY FAIRY LILIAN.—For the blonde that you describe yourself we doubt if it would be becoming. Pale blue or green would be preferable.

UP-TO-DATE.—You must have great interest to procure a Government situation. There are thousands of applicants for comparatively a few places.

ANXIOUS TO KNOW.—The handwriting is clear enough, but not what is usually regarded as a commercial hand, though suitable for business purposes.

MADRID.—Have it well shaken to remove all dust, then well rub it all over with a cloth wrung out of salt-water. Alcohol will remove stains.

CONSUMED READER.—The materials can be got at stores or shops where they supply such things for manufacturing purposes, but not at ordinary chemists.

RENTING.—By no means come to London in the hope of obtaining employment; there are hundreds in your line out of work, and a stranger would stand but little chance.

FOOTLOOSE.—We should strenuously advise you to abandon the idea of entering a profession where so few succeed, and so many experience such great disappointment.

INCONSTANT.—Your best plan is to state frankly to your present lover the state of your feelings. If it is a little humiliating, no doubt, but it is the only "honest and true" course.

BEAUCLEGG.—Rain is measured by weighing any given amount and determining the specific gravity. The weight of a cubic foot of water is about 1,000 ounces avoirdupois.

FINDLER.—He was born in 1550, and died in 1635, so that we do not see how your violin, dated 1689, can have been made by him. If it is genuine it ought to be of considerable value.

DISGUSTED.—We are afraid you will have to be content with the noise which nature endowed you. As you describe it it does not seem to be at all objectionable—a very good type of noise.

DEVOTED READER.—First dry it thoroughly, then rub the spots of dirt with a penny to loosen them. Brush with a moderately stiff brush, and if the mud has left stains, rub them with gin or benzine.

MOTHER.—A mother can by will dispose of her house property absolutely as she thinks fit, giving it all to a stranger for that matter, or dividing equally among the children, or giving it to some and leaving others out.

PAINT.—We should advise you to take it to a silversmith's and have it done properly. If you are not accustomed to work at such things, you would probably get rid of a good deal of the silver, as well as the gold.

EVADNA.—Sponge it with a cloth wrung out of clean soapwater to which turpentine has been added in the proportion of a tablespoonful to a gallon. Rub as dry as possible with a dry cloth and either keep the windows open or light a fire to thoroughly dry it.

ANNIE.—Never use a brush on it. First well sweep off all dust, then wash it all over with a mixture of lukewarm milk and water (except in very hot weather, when the mixed liquid should be cold), using a large, soft cloth for the purpose.

MORICAN.—You may set any poetry you find in magazines to music for your own or friends' entertainment, but must not presume to print and publish without first having obtained permission of the author and publisher of the paper in which the poem appeared.

SPRING CLEANING.—If the paint has become dry, put a few drops of turpentine in the sprayer and let it stand a short time; then rub the sprayer and if all the paint is not removed, repeat the work. When entirely gone, rub off with alcohol.

GARCON.—It is difficult for us to answer your query, since we do not know upon what terms of familiarity you are with the lady, or how long you have known her, but we certainly do not think she would take it amiss if you call her by her Christian name.

MAY.—It should be first well washed with warm water and soap; wipe dry; and well rub with a flannel dipped in a little whiting slightly dampened. Wipe off the whiting with a soft chamois leather; if the enamel is very bad it can easily be re-enamelled at home.

ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.—Any man who likes can put a cockade on his coachman's hat; the old rule was that only the nobility, officers of the army and navy, judges, and professors could sport this decoration, but the exception is now the rule.

DOWNHILL.—Always use soap once a day, twice if you live in a town. The best plan is to wash the face first in warm water with plenty of soap, then rinse first in tepid water, then in cold. Dry carefully and rub in a very little cold cream once a day.

NOW AND THEN.

We meet just with a careless word,
Yet all my heart is strangely stirred,
Remembering the days of old,
Ere you had bartered love for gold—
Aye, love for gold!

Oh, once I loved a senseless sod
Whereon your dainty feet had trod;
Once was your garment's simple hem
More precious than a diadem—
A diadem!

But this is over now—my heart
For aye is rent from yours apart;
Where love abode dark hate is born—
I give unto you scorn for scorn—
Yes, scorn for scorn!

You queen it in your satin rare—
The envious sneer, the vulgar stare;
You blaze with diamonds every one
Half answer me the splendour of the sun;
But answer me the gems of gold—
Make up for all the love of old—
The love of old!

ALIDA.—Cover the spots with a paste made of soda, lime, and cold water, which leave on for twenty-four hours, and then wash off with hot water. If the spots have got very dry this treatment may need to be repeated.

ANGLO-SCOT.—Queen Victoria unites in herself lineal descent from both Scottish and English royal lines, and is therefore the legitimate heir to the thrones or crowns of both kingdoms; the Prince of Wales is next in succession; if the Union were broken, new lines must be set up for both.

FLUTTERBY.—To preserve flannel from moth, store it away with paper moistened with paraffin or turpentine. Just enough of this is wanted to thoroughly perfume the drawer or cupboard where the flannel and other woollen garments are stored, and it may be wrapped in a cloth or clean paper so as to soil nothing.

NEAT NANCY.—To give a gloss to linen: On two ounces of rum add one pint of boiling water; cover till next day, then strain it carefully and put into a clean bottle. A tablespoonful of this liquor stirred into a pint of ordinary starch will give collars and cuffs an appearance of newness.

M. D.-1. As to whether a carpet should go quite up to the wall all round the room is a matter of taste. Some like to leave about eighteen inches margin round the wainscot, and this looks very well when the space thus left is nicely polished. 2. The address as you put it would do very nicely. Thank you for kind appreciation of the "L. R."

TWO PLUMP.—A simple course of diet and exercise often produces the best results. The patients may eat only lean meats, thin soups, poultry, game, and all vegetables except potatoes, carrots and parsnips. Pastry and puddings of all kinds should be avoided. Avoid milk, except in tea or coffee and cream at all times. Natural mineral waters have an excellent effect. A small glassful three times a day in a little fresh water or milk should be taken; free exercise should be indulged in, and baths are excellent.

FOURER.—To ascertain whether or not a room is damp, two pounds of fresh lime should be placed therein, after having been cleaned, the doors and windows open. In twenty-four hours it should be weighed, and if the lime has absorbed more than one per cent. the room should be considered damp and classed as unhealthy.

ADARAL.—Sals of lemon rubbed in, then moistened with a little warm water, and then sponged off with clean, warm water, may at once, if persevered with, remove the stain; but we cannot promise that it will leave "no stain, white or otherwise;" therefore you had better first try it on a spare piece of parchment.

ETIQUETTE.—Invitations to dinner, whether the notice given be long or short, should be accepted or declined within twenty-four hours. To leave an invitation unanswered longer than this is discourteous, and suggests the idea that the recipient is delaying to reply on the chance of receiving some more desirable invitation.

NIGHTEN.—The young man is in the prime of his adolescence, and so better fitted to grapple with the care and responsibilities of his position. Ten or eleven years in the life of a man bears no comparison with the same period in that of a woman, for the plain reason that she ages both in appearance and constitution so much sooner than he does.

NELL.—Take some white of egg, with an equal quantity of water; beat the two together thoroughly well, then sprinkle in sufficient finely-powdered slaked lime to make the whole into a thick cream or thin paste. Apply quickly, and well press the parts together, and allow the mended article to lie by for a day or two. As the cement becomes hard very quickly, it must be used at once.

HOMES MILLINER.—First shake out all the dust, then lay on a flat board and well rub on both sides with a piece of flannel; this takes out any dust that may be left. Take some beer and sponge the silk all over, sponging across the width of the silk, and not down the length. Leave for ten minutes, spread on a clean ironing-board, and press with a moderately hot iron on what is intended to be the wrong side.

ADAMING READER.—First shake thoroughly, brushing off any dirt. Then wring a bit of the same material as the dress out of gin-and-water, mixed in equal proportions, and rub the dress well over with this, afterwards hanging in the air or a warm room to dry. This treatment removes dust that the brush makes no impression on. Any velvet should be cleaned with a piece of soft flannel, or rubbed with the palm of the hand.

FUZZLED.—The year 1900 will not be a leap year, because it is only, of the century years, every fourth one which is so ranked; the days in the year are made to correspond as nearly as possible with the time taken by the earth to make one complete round of the sun, but even after adding one year to every fourth, or leap year, the calculation is not quite exact, and to reduce the error, only every fourth century year, as stated, is made a leap year; that keeps things straight.

IGNORAMUS.—Rain is an accumulation of the tiny particles of the vapour of the atmosphere into drops. These drops, first small of size, attract others of their kind, and become drops of such magnitude that they fall to the earth because of their weight. There is a limit to the quantity of water which the air is capable of absorbing and retaining as invisible vapour. Warm air is able to hold more than cold air. Hence when the air which is saturated with moisture becomes cold for any reason whatever, it can no longer retain its moisture. A portion must, under such condition, accumulate into drops. These fall to the earth in the shape of rain.

SANTA CLAUS.—Christmas as now held was in our part of the world founded upon a heathen festival; it was considered desirable as a means of winning the people from idolatry, and inducing them to adopt Christian observances instead, to take advantage of the festivals already popular among them by giving them a Christian significance; the Yule festival was the great one of the year, when the birth of a new season was supposed to take place; the Christian teachers taught the people to regard it instead as the date of Christ's birth, but as a matter of fact that date has never been ascertained; there is nothing in the New Testament enjoining its celebration, though all Christians are required to frequently and duly celebrate the death and resurrection of Christ; Christmas has been held at all dates from December up to May, and the one certain thing is that Christ's birth could not have happened on 25th December.

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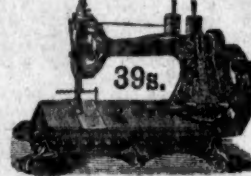
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